

RIGHTEOUS LOT? THE CHARACTERIZATION OF LOT IN 2 PETER 2:7–8  
AS A CASE OF INNER-BIBLICAL EXEGESIS

A THESIS

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BY  
AARON DEBELAK

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## Chapter 1

### METHOD AND APPROACH

#### 1.1 THE NEED FOR THIS STUDY

Any serious reader of the Christian scriptures has probably wondered upon occasion not just why a biblical author says this or that in a particular context, but how it is that a biblical author can make a particular claim on any grounds at all, regardless of the context. One such cause for wonder would seem to occur in 2 Pet 2:7–8, where, in the span of two verses, the author calls Lot “righteous”<sup>1</sup> three times, going so far as to claim that Lot was “distressed” and “torment[ed]” because of the wicked deeds he witnessed (presumably in Sodom). Yet, in light of what one might call a ‘straightforward’ reading of Lot’s actions in Genesis, such a positive characterization of Lot is rather perplexing. At the very least Lot is certainly never called “righteous” in Genesis. As one scholar puts it, “Peter’s aggrandizing of Lot *does* present a hermeneutical problem, in that many of Lot’s actions in the Genesis narrative can be called into question.”<sup>2</sup>

On what basis did Peter attribute “righteousness” to Lot, then? In characterizing Lot as a righteous man, did Peter draw on, appropriate, or adapt a specific source no longer extant?<sup>3</sup> Or is Peter’s characterization of Lot somehow warranted on

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<sup>1</sup> Unless otherwise noted, in chapters 1–2 the term “righteousness” and its cognates are used in an ethical, practical sense over against an imputed, positional sense. The concept will receive greater attention in chapter 3.

<sup>2</sup> Makujina 1998, 268, author’s emphasis; cf. Cox 1884, 270; Green 2008, 258; Reese 2007, 151.

<sup>3</sup> E.g., Josephus, *Ant.* VI 5, wherein Josephus recounts the violent history between Israel and the Ammonite king, Nahash. Before the discovery of 4QSam<sup>a</sup>, we had no record of such an account.

exegetical grounds? A survey of proposed solutions to these questions<sup>4</sup> reveals that sufficient attention has not been given to how the characterization of Lot as a righteous man may have been affected by a comparison with Noah (Gen 6–9)—a comparison warranted by the analogical nature of the flood and Sodom stories and the grouping together of the two men in Jewish and Christian literature.<sup>5</sup> The present study therefore seeks to fill this lacuna through a literary analysis of Noah and Lot in the flood and Sodom stories, respectively (6–9; 19). Since the scope of this study is limited to an investigation into the possible *sources* (exegetical or otherwise) of Peter’s claim regarding Lot’s righteousness, only scant attention is given to how Peter’s reference to Lot in 2 Pet 2:7–8 functions in its immediate and wider contexts.

## 1.2 APPROACH AND OUTLINE OF THIS STUDY

At the core of this study lies the simple observation that no text was created in a vacuum. At a minimum, all authors are broadly influenced by the voices, traditions, and works of their past, which in turn shapes their literary creations. What textual forms such influences take, whether implicit or explicit, conscious or unconscious, depends upon the author and his communicative intent. For an influence to be *recognized*, however, a *correspondence* must be established, whether specific or general. Thus broadly conceived, the present thesis is a study into the nature,

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<sup>4</sup> For such a survey, see chapter 2.

<sup>5</sup> See, e.g., Wisdom of Solomon 10:4–6; Luke 17:26–30; 2 Pet 2:5–8.



function, and effects of inner-biblical correspondences within the Hebrew scriptures, paying particular attention to various forms of scriptural reuse that can be reasonably ascribed to an author's<sup>6</sup> intention.

Over against a reader-oriented approach, which ignores the question of literary dependence and instead opts to read two (or more) texts in light of each other through a synchronic analysis, the present study fundamentally takes an author-oriented approach, for which the question of literary dependence is crucial for a diachronic analysis of corresponding texts. In terms of the modern reader's role, the difference between the two approaches is significant: rather than creating meaning between texts, an author-oriented approach attempts to identify meaning inherent in scriptural texts that in some way reuse scripture.<sup>7</sup>

The present chapter takes up the question of methodology appropriate for a study on the effects of inner-biblical correspondences. It addresses such questions as, What constitutes an instance of scriptural reuse? What kinds of scriptural reuse occur in the OT? How does one identify scriptural reuse as such? What terms best describe various instances of scriptural reuse? In what ways does scriptural reuse function? These fundamental questions will pave the way for the methodological groundwork for this project. In chapter 2 we turn to consider whether sufficient warrant can be found in Gen 19 for Peter's ascription of Lot as righteous in 2 Pet

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<sup>6</sup> Our notion of 'author' here leaves room to include the activity of multiple authors for a single book, as well as the activity of later scribes and redactors altering scriptural texts.

<sup>7</sup> For some brief reflections regarding the demands that the Hebrew scriptures place on ancient readership, see chapter 4.

2:7–8. After a brief exegetical analysis of 2 Pet 2:7–8, several arguments concerning the status of Lot’s righteousness in Gen 19 are surveyed and evaluated, leaving the door open to consider an alternative source for Peter’s characterization of Lot.

Chapter 3 is the heart of the thesis, inasmuch as it argues that Lot’s analogical relationship to Noah provides plausible exegetical warrant for understanding Lot’s characterization in 2 Pet 2:7–8.

### 1.3 DEFINING TERMS FOR SCRIPTURAL REUSE

It is commonplace among scholars who specialize in the study of scriptural reuse to lament the ubiquitous terminological confusion within the sub-discipline. Indeed, inner-biblical correspondences are generally referred to in one of five ways: ‘intertextuality,’ ‘tradition history,’ ‘inner-biblical allusion,’ ‘inner-biblical exegesis,’ and ‘inner-biblical interpretation.’ Although ‘intertextuality’ is the term most frequently used in modern literary studies and biblical studies,<sup>8</sup> its earlier roots in the work of French-Bulgarian semiologist Julia Kristeva make it a poor fit for describing inner-biblical scriptural reuse, which “requires a method that is rigorous with regard to directionality and one that accounts for features and techniques of reuse that are operative in antiquity.”<sup>9</sup> For heuristic purposes, this study uses the

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<sup>8</sup> So claims Gibson 2016, 30. On the methodological problems that accompany any discussion concerning the relationships between texts in the OT more generally, see Weyde 2005.

<sup>9</sup> Tooman 2011, 10. For a clarion call for methodological clarity with respect to the terms ‘intertextuality,’ ‘inner-biblical exegesis,’ and ‘inner-biblical allusion,’ see Meek 2014, who argues that the use of ‘intertextuality’ is “misleading and unethical” when one is “attempting to demonstrate — or presupposing — an intentional, historical relationship between texts” (291); cf. also Yoon 2012, who

terms ‘scriptural reuse’ and ‘inner-biblical interpretation’ synonymously, both of which serve as umbrella terms for ‘inner-biblical allusion’ and ‘inner-biblical exegesis’.<sup>10</sup> The distinction between these latter two categories lies in the fact that an inner-biblical allusion is but one mode of inner-biblical exegesis; it is a specific form of tacit reference which a biblical author may choose to use in order to provide an interpretation of an earlier biblical text.

Along the spectrum between overt scriptural reuse and covert scriptural reuse, the clearest and most overt instance is a ‘citation’: “an intentional, attributed quotation, acknowledging the source, perhaps through an introductory formula.”<sup>11</sup> Instances of citation are quite rare in the OT. An inner-biblical ‘allusion’ is a form of intentional<sup>12</sup> and implicit (i.e., not signaled by a citation formula) textual

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argues that the meaning of the term ‘intertextuality’ as it is used in biblical studies is too dissonant to its original sense to be useful.

<sup>10</sup> Gibson 2016, 32, though Gibson himself avoids language of ‘scriptural reuse’ and instead prefers to use solely ‘inner-biblical interpretation’ as an umbrella term for both ‘inner-biblical allusion’ and ‘inner-biblical exegesis’.

<sup>11</sup> Gibson 2016, 41. Though Gibson uses the term ‘quotation’ in his definition above, he does so in a different sense: “A *quotation* is an intentional, explicit reuse of keywords or a phrase from an earlier work, which may include the element of exegesis or reinterpretation of the source text within the quoting text. In this monograph, quotation is equivalent to inner-biblical exegesis” (2016, 41, italics original). ‘Citation’ and ‘quotation’ are used synonymously throughout this study.

<sup>12</sup> Tooman 2011, 7; Kline 2016, 3, 5. Sommer finds that binding authorial intention to the concept of allusion is “neither useful nor accurate,” since “[e]ven when an author borrows unconsciously, the alteration of the source’s wording can provide new insight into the alluding text” (1998, 208–09 n. 17). Tooman rightly notes, however, that an unconscious allusion and an intentional allusion are “not discernibly different.” Both imply “a conscious or unconscious approval of the appropriateness of the marker(s) in the new context,” which then forms a connection between two texts that inevitably “effects the reading of (at least) the evoking text” (2011, 7 n. 19). Cf. Lyons, who rejects ‘unconscious use’ as a useful category “because it is more difficult to detect and verify than conscious use” (2009, 73). For examples of what R. Hays calls an “authorially unpremeditated echo,” see Hays 1989, 201 n. 99.

referencing that seeks to transform its source text in some way.<sup>13</sup> An allusion occurs when an author intentionally reuses a locution (i.e., a word, phrase, clause, sentence, etc.) from an earlier work for “a rhetorical or strategic end,”<sup>14</sup> and it often (always?) evokes the wider context of the alluded text. An inner-biblical ‘echo’ is an intentional *or* unintentional reuse of a locution that has no semantic bearing on or interpretive significance in the echoing text.<sup>15</sup> An echo’s communicative success or failure does not affect an author’s communicative intention. A ‘trace’ is “an unintentional connection that is so faint as to be unattributable.”<sup>16</sup> The broadest category of textual dependence is referred to as an ‘influence,’ which (again) acknowledges that no text was written in a vacuum. Authors are influenced by and in some sense dependent upon former literature, a phenomenon that can manifest itself in the form of a citation, allusion, echo, or trace.

These categories are necessarily distinguished qualitatively rather than quantitatively. In other words, no attempt is made to differentiate citation, allusion, and echo on the basis of word count.<sup>17</sup> Selecting quantitative criteria cannot escape a

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<sup>13</sup> Cf. the definition of literary allusion by Abrams: “a brief reference, explicit or indirect, to a person, place, or event, or to another literary work or passage” (1971, 8); cf. also the broader definition by Ben-Porat: “The literary allusion is a device for the simultaneous activation of two texts” (1976, 107).

<sup>14</sup> Gibson 2016, 41.

<sup>15</sup> Cf. Gibson: “an *echo* is an unintentional reuse of keywords or a phrase from an earlier work, which does not exert interpretive significance in the echoing texts” (2016, 43, *italics original*); cf. also Tooman, who agrees that an echo is “not semantically transformative,” though he nevertheless regards an echo as a *deliberate* allusion that includes “alliteration, rhyme, and refrain” (2011, 8, *emphasis added*).

<sup>16</sup> Gibson 2016, 43.

<sup>17</sup> See, e.g., Beetham: “Therefore, for this study a rule shall be arbitrarily set that a verbatim or near verbatim reference back to a previous text of six words or more will be considered a *quotation*. A reference of five or less—even though verbatim—will be labeled an *allusion*” (2008, 16–17, *italics original*). For the observations that follow, see Gibson 2016, 40–41.

degree of arbitrariness, nor is it helpful in discerning between instances of intentional scriptural reuse from instances of shared language that are due to a common source, common expression, and so on. Moreover, such criteria inevitably relegate what may be a powerful, clear, one-word allusion to a mere echo, and they fail to account for the syntactical and grammatical changes that often accompany scriptural reuse (e.g., inverting one or more elements of the source text, omitting and/or adding pronominal suffixes). Although the definitions provided above assume that a citation, allusion, and echo possess at least one shared locution with its source text, the categories are fundamentally conceived in terms of formal markers and degree of authorial intentionality and explicitness.<sup>18</sup>

#### 1.4 IDENTIFYING AND ASSESSING EVIDENCE FOR SCRIPTURAL REUSE

It is important to acknowledge at the outset that an inner-biblical correspondence could be due to any number of factors besides an author's intention, such as a common source, a similar tradition-history, stock vocabulary, or shared expressions that were part of a "shared stream of linguistic tradition,"<sup>19</sup> or perhaps sheer coincidence.<sup>20</sup> But it is no less important to recognize that the reader has at his disposal several criteria that can be employed to establish more firmly an objective case of scriptural reuse.

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<sup>18</sup> That a citation must possess at least one shared locution does not mean, of course, that this is a sufficient condition. Citations will never be comprised of (say) one lexeme.

<sup>19</sup> Fishbane 1985, 288.

<sup>20</sup> Gibson 2016, 33; Kline 2016, 20.

Since cases of citation are relatively clear, insofar as the author explicitly acknowledges the source of the citation, we turn our attention to identifying and assessing evidence for other kinds of scriptural reuse. Possibly “the single most important factor” for confirming an intentional, inner-biblical correspondence is the presence of shared lexemes.<sup>21</sup> The probability of scriptural reuse as such is increased if the shared lexemes are rare. This is especially true if the author had at his disposal one or more semantically equivalent lexemes to employ instead of the rare lexeme.<sup>22</sup> Yet context must be the deciding factor in establishing a valid case of scriptural reuse via the employment of rare words, since (for example) coincidence is always a possibility for the best explanation. Specifically, if two texts possess lexical correspondences, the probability of scriptural reuse is here increased if both texts also share similar themes, motifs, structures, and/or historical and rhetorical contexts<sup>23</sup>—though a strict lexical correspondence can still occur in the absence of these shared elements.<sup>24</sup> Conversely, a deliberate connection between two texts can occur on the basis of thematic and conceptual correspondences alone; shared language is neither a necessary nor sufficient condition for scriptural reuse.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> Leonard 2008, 246; so too Miller: “All can agree that lexical resemblances constitute the best criterion by which to measure proposed intertextual relationships” (2010, 303–04).

<sup>22</sup> Leonard 2008, 251–52; Lyons 2009, 72.

<sup>23</sup> Per Leonard’s sixth criterion for identifying an inner-biblical allusion: “Shared language in similar contexts suggests a stronger connection than does shared language alone” (2008, 255).

<sup>24</sup> Per Leonard’s seventh and eighth criterion: “(7) Shared language need not be accompanied by shared ideology to establish a connection. (8) Shared language need not be accompanied by shared form to establish a connection” (2008, 246).

<sup>25</sup> Tooman maintains that such correspondences are observable only after specific elements (presumably locutions of some kind) of the evoked text are recognized: “Once these elements are recognized, other connections (conceptual, thematic, structural, or affective) may become observable”

Another broad correspondence can occur at the level of structure, a correspondence defined as “the presence in the alluding text and in the source text not only of the same or similar ideas or words but their presence *in the same or in a similar order*.”<sup>26</sup>

The extent to which two texts share locutions that are relatively infrequent throughout the OT affects the probability of scriptural reuse, as does the number of rare locutions in a specific context. This phenomenon may appear as several individual words that occur in a short sequence, or a shared phrase or clause. In general, “[s]hared phrases suggest a stronger connection than do individual shared terms,”<sup>27</sup> with the exception that “[a] single rare term ... can be more probative than a longer common phrase.” Thus both syntactical and lexical correspondences must be taken into account. The plausibility of scriptural reuse further increases if two texts share locutions that are either exclusive to both texts or in a noticeably higher proportion than other corresponding texts in the OT.<sup>28</sup> Occurrences of *common* shared lexemes cannot be neglected, however, since “the presence of multiple common words, the combination of which is rare, does suggest dependence.”

Thus far it has been assumed that instances of shared language which constitute deliberate scriptural reuse are semantically equivalent; but this is not always the case: “the meaning of a locution in its original literary context and the meaning of that

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(2011, 8). Over against this we submit that such correspondences are observable even in the absence of shared language (so Miller 2010, 295–97).

<sup>26</sup> Kline 2016, 18, author’s emphasis.

<sup>27</sup> Leonard 2008, 252; the citation that follows, *ibid.*, n. 34.

<sup>28</sup> Lyons 2009, 69; the citation that follows, *ibid.*

same locution in the new text need not correspond in any way.”<sup>29</sup> Indeed, inner-biblical links in the OT are sometimes established “by means of identical or similar graphemes, regardless of their function(s) within a particular context.” In a similar vein, the reproduction of borrowed locutions need not be exact in order to count as an instance of scriptural reuse. For example, an alluding text may add or omit parts of speech (e.g., pronominal suffixes, prepositions), adjust the syntax of the borrowed locution to better fit the author’s purpose, and so forth. Lastly: “*Inversion* of identical or nearly identical elements between two texts is one of the clearest and most reliable markers of reuse.”<sup>30</sup>

### 1.5 ESTABLISHING THE DIRECTION OF DEPENDENCE

For an instance of scriptural reuse to function properly within a particular context, a source text must be assumed. Although one can identify an inner-biblical connection without regard to chronological or textual priority, the literary function of the connection (i.e., its “rhetorical and semantic effect”<sup>31</sup>) cannot be understood apart from an accurate discernment of one text’s use of another. In this regard, diachronic considerations are critical. It follows that a necessary criterion for establishing an instance of scriptural reuse is ‘availability’. That is, it must be plausible for the

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<sup>29</sup> Tooman 2011, 31; the observation and citation that follow, *ibid.*

<sup>30</sup> Tooman 2011, 30, *italics original*; so too Lyons 2009, 71; both Tooman and Lyons note that this phenomenon is sometimes referred to as “Seidel’s Law,” an expression derived from a study by Moshe Seidel.

<sup>31</sup> Hays 1989, 19.



author to have had access to the source(s) he allegedly used.<sup>32</sup>

In general, a text is more likely to be the later of two texts if it (1) adds additional elements to its corresponding text; (2) fills in a perceived ‘gap’ in its corresponding text; or (3) expands character<sup>33</sup> speeches.<sup>34</sup> In those cases where chronological priority is difficult to establish, one must determine which direction of dependence makes the most sense of each respective context. Is the exegetical function more fitting, or stronger, from one proposed direction of dependence rather than the other?<sup>35</sup> Again, in such adjudications context is key.

Another useful criterion for identifying the direction of dependence between two texts is a shared locution’s frequency.<sup>36</sup> Tooman elaborates with the following example: “if a locution (or other element) occurs many times in one text and occurs only once in another text, then, apart from evidence to the contrary, it is more likely that the text with the single occurrence is the borrowing text.” This criterion stems from the assumption that it is more likely for an author to reuse a locution that is relatively widespread and thus more easily recognizable for the intended readers

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<sup>32</sup> For the use of ‘availability’ as a criterion to establish echoes (as defined by Hays) of scripture in the letters of Paul, see Hays 1989, 29–30.

<sup>33</sup> Throughout this study, reference to an individual as a “character” is not intended to evoke the narrative category of ‘character’ developed from modern fiction, nor does it imply that such characters were not historical figures.

<sup>34</sup> These criteria are selectively drawn from David Carr’s six-fold list (2001, 126), cited in Tooman 2011, 34. Lyons seems to subsume such criteria under the broader rubric of a text’s “creative interaction” with its source text (2009, 73).

<sup>35</sup> Kline 2016, 22–23; Hays’s criterion of ‘satisfaction’ could be usefully appropriated here: “does the proposed reading make sense? Does it illuminate the surrounding discourse? Does it produce for the reader a satisfying account of the effect of the intertextual relation?” (1989, 31). The inherent subjectivity of these questions does not preclude their usefulness. For an alternative view which calls into the question the usefulness of the criterion ‘satisfaction’ as defined by Hays, see Porter 2008, 39.

<sup>36</sup> Tooman refers to this criterion using the label “volume of use” (2011; 32–33); cf. Lyons 2009, 68–69; Hays 1989, 30; the observations and citation that follow, Tooman 2011, 32.

than it is for an author to repeatedly reuse a locution that, having only occurred once, is at a high risk of being missed by his readers. Yet again, however, this criterion (among others) cannot be applied rigidly, for “in certain cases the inverse is true” (e.g., when an author repeatedly uses a locution in order to direct attention to the evoked text).

One would do well to remember that criteria for identifying scriptural reuse and for determining the direction of dependence inevitably bleed together and inform each other.<sup>37</sup> As the reader treks through the messy biblical terrain, she may find that an instance of scriptural reuse is established while, or perhaps after, a text’s direction of dependence is made clear.<sup>38</sup> The *function* of scriptural reuse in a particular context can also have a direct bearing on the process of determining the direction of dependence.<sup>39</sup> Indeed, the reader falls short of the interpretive task if he simply identifies an instance of scriptural reuse. One must go further by determining the interpretative significance of the reuse in the (for example) alluding text.<sup>40</sup> For an allusion, by its very nature, “consists not only in the echoing of an earlier text but in the utilization of the marked material for some rhetorical or

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<sup>37</sup> As do observations concerning the possible functions of scriptural reuse (see below).

<sup>38</sup> See Leonard’s criteria for identifying the direction of dependence: “(1) Does one text claim to draw on another? (2) Are there elements in the texts that help to fix their dates? (3) Is one text capable of producing the other? (4) Does one text assume the other? (5) Does one text show a general pattern of dependence on other texts? (6) Are there rhetorical patterns in the texts that suggest that one text has used the other in an exegetically significant way?” (2008, 258).

<sup>39</sup> “[A]n author can interpret an earlier text, use it as a basis for an argument, disagree with it, or reuse its words to create a new argument” (Lyons 2009, 73). In short: the source text will be “distinctively rehandled” (Schultz 1999, 226).

<sup>40</sup> In Sternberg’s words, “it is not enough to trace a pattern; it must also be validated and justified in terms of communicative design” (1985, 2).

strategic end.”<sup>41</sup> Here, however, as elsewhere, “it is less a matter of method than of sensibility”<sup>42</sup>—more art than science.<sup>43</sup> In the end, as D. McAuley observes, “the plausibility of the presence and interpretation of an allusion cannot be argued from a set of criteria—analyzing allusion is, and remains, a subjective enterprise. After all, allusions are ‘allusive’ and, unlike quotations, there can be no certainty that an author intentionally incorporated the proposed allusion into his/her text; detecting allusions is a matter of intuition, guesswork, and our own and others’s insights.”<sup>44</sup>

## 1.6 ANALOGICAL NARRATIVES

A still broader category of correspondence relevant to this study is ‘narrative analogy,’ or what we shall call ‘analogical narratives’.<sup>45</sup> Before considering what analogical narratives are, we must first define the concept of analogy itself.

According to M. Sternberg, an analogy is:

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<sup>41</sup> Sommer 1998, 15. Noble’s negative criterion is particularly relevant here: “I suggest that we should be very wary of intertextual readings that are top-heavy with supposed allusions which make no significant contribution to our understanding of either text” (2002, 252).

<sup>42</sup> Adapted from Hays 1989, 21.

<sup>43</sup> In the introduction to his monograph on ‘metaphor plot,’ Berman describes well the inevitable hermeneutical spiral that occurs throughout the entire process of establishing an analogy between narratives: “From the moment that common elements are initially identified between two narratives the processes of establishing meaning and of discovering further common elements become highly interdependent. On the one hand, the identification of the initial elements of analogy immediately begs an interpretation. This interpretation, in turn, helps identify, categorize, rank, and potentially even discount altogether, other potential elements of the analogical base” (2004, 14).

<sup>44</sup> McAuley 2015, 43–4.

<sup>45</sup> As far as I am aware, the term ‘narrative analogy’ was coined by Alter (1983, 21). Garsiel prefers ‘narrative duplication’ (1985, 28). In my view, the usefulness of both terms is hindered by their ambiguity. On the surface, ‘narrative analogy’ is suggestive of *any* analogical element *within* narratives, while ‘narrative duplication’ insinuates far more overlap between analogous narratives than is often the case. I therefore prefer to use the term ‘analogical narratives’ to refer to two narratives that are analogous in some way(s), though I follow convention when referring to the views of other scholars.

[A]n essentially spatial pattern, composed of at least two elements (two characters, events, strands of action, etc.) between which there is at least one point of similarity and one of dissimilarity: the similarity affords the basis for the spatial linkage and confrontation of the analogical elements, whereas the dissimilarity makes for their mutual illumination, qualification, or simply concretization.<sup>46</sup>

In contradistinction to our rejection of using quantitative criteria for defining common terms used for instances of scriptural reuse, “[w]hat distinguishes *narrative analogy* from *analogy* is primarily a quantitative issue.”<sup>47</sup> If, according to Sternberg, the presence of an analogy requires “at least one point of similarity and one of dissimilarity,” at a certain point the accumulation of correspondences between two narratives becomes so great as to warrant the conclusion that the narratives themselves are analogous. Yet, attempting to define *precisely* where the line of analogical narratives lies would only invite an arbitrary selection of quantitative criteria (e.g., X number of shared elements within Y number of verses hereby constitutes a narrative analogy). The alternative need not be methodological anarchy, however, since as a starting point analogical narratives must share *a similar plot, a common subject matter, and lexemes*.<sup>48</sup>

In his groundbreaking study of what he calls ‘metaphor analogy’ (a subset of narrative analogy), J. Berman helpfully suggests that in establishing a narrative

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<sup>46</sup> Sternberg 1985, 365.

<sup>47</sup> Berman 2004, 1, italics original.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid., 7–17.

analogy by way of shared language, an additional criterion is needed: what he terms ‘the criterion of congruence.’<sup>49</sup> This criterion demands that “each of the common lexical terms in the first narrative must be used in a *matching* and *equivalent* fashion in the other.” Accordingly, if the shared lexemes do not serve the same function in each narrative of the analogical pair, they should not be considered as part of the “analogical base.”<sup>50</sup>

Within the larger category of analogical narratives, Y. Zakovitch has observed what he terms ‘reflection stories,’ wherein an author uses allusions to intentionally shape a character as the antithesis of a character in another narrative.<sup>51</sup> The effect of the reflection story is that it “awakens in the reader undeniable associations to the source-story; the relationship between the new narrative and its source is like that between an image and its mirrored reflection: the reflection inverts the storyline of the original narrative.” From the reader’s standpoint, not only is the new character evaluated in light of the model character “both with regard to action and to lack of action,” but the inverse occurs as well: the original character is now shaded from the new retrospective light given by the antithetical character.

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<sup>49</sup> Ibid., 11; the citations that follow, *ibid.*, italics original.

<sup>50</sup> Berman’s ‘metaphor analogy’ differs from narrative analogy in three main respects. First, whereas narrative analogies concern narratives that possess a common subject matter and plot (e.g., the three wife-sister stories in Genesis), metaphor analogies do not, thus requiring “a higher degree of abstraction” (2004, 8). Second, a metaphor analogy is immune to a form critical approach, since the two narratives in each case are dealing with “different areas of human endeavor” (2004, 8). And third, establishing a metaphor analogy is more heavily dependent upon shared language than is the case for narrative analogy.

<sup>51</sup> Zakovitch 1993; the citations that follow, *ibid.*, 139.

## 1.7 CHARACTERIZATION

With this general framework in view, a consideration of the various ways in which OT characters are prone to characterization *by way of comparison with another character* is in order.<sup>52</sup> Apart from shared locutions and a similar plot and subject matter, several features of biblical narrative invite the reader to compare and/or contrast two (or more) biblical characters.<sup>53</sup> That Jacob and Esau are brothers, for instance, or that David and Solomon are father and son, summons the reader to process the actions and attitudes of both characters in light of one another. This effect is not so much a product of authorial intention as it is the inevitable byproduct of human thinking at its most basic level—which is fundamentally comparative.<sup>54</sup> Likewise, processing is engaged when characters interact with one another, such that “relationships and actions form a connection between them.” The curious reader cannot help but wonder: In their interactions with one another, how do the actions and conduct of *this* character compare to those of *that* character? Whatever the reader’s conclusion, whether inline with an author’s intentions or not, it will inevitably effect the reader’s characterization of a character. Even where characters do not directly interact with one another, an author’s placement of characters in the

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<sup>52</sup> This rather narrow treatment of characterization is due to the fact that the effects of characterization specifically achieved by comparing one character with another is central to the main argument (see chapter 3). For much broader and more thorough treatments of characterization in the OT, see Bar-Efrat 1989, 47–92 and esp. Sternberg 1985, 321–364.

<sup>53</sup> For the observations that follow, see Garsiel 1985, 16–21.

<sup>54</sup> “The human system of consciousness, in sum, is to a decisive degree based upon comparative thinking, which deepens our apprehension and understanding of the universe around us and of the abstract topics which engage our thoughts” (Garsiel 1985, 16–17); the citation that follows, *ibid.*, 19.

same narrative time and space can form a comparative link.<sup>55</sup> Furthermore, distance in narrative time can serve to invite the reader to compare the actions of a single character with his or her actions at a different point in narrative time, such that the reader is at times confronted with two seemingly different characters. For example, how do Saul's actions in the episodes of his early life compare to his actions later in his career? The answer to this question, as with the others above, will surely have an effect on characterization. Less intuitive, but no less important, are comparisons and contrasts created by the mere "textual contiguity" of biblical episodes—irrespective of whether or not they share a common plot or theme.<sup>56</sup> Thus it becomes imperative to ask, Might the biblical author have intended to juxtapose the actions of one character with, say, the actions of a character in an episode that immediately precedes (or follows) the current narrative under investigation?<sup>57</sup>

## 1.8 CONCLUSION

Attending to the many and varied ways in which the OT evokes and reuses other parts of the OT requires much from the reader; it is a daunting task indeed. But this is precisely what one must do if he is to consider the range of possibilities for the

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<sup>55</sup> As an example, Garsiel here mentions Samuel and Eli's sons, who "operate in parallel, at the same time (the period of the narrative) and in the same place (the sanctuary at Shiloh), but there is no real direct interaction between them on the level of the plot, for they have no dealings with one another nor any direct effect upon one another" (1985, 19).

<sup>56</sup> This effect, too, is an inevitable byproduct of human thinking: "In the ordinary nonfictional world ... we readily compare objects or matters which (even 'by chance') have a contiguity in time or space" (Garsiel 1985, 21).

<sup>57</sup> A prime example occurs in Gen 19, in which Lot's hospitality is juxtaposed with Abraham's hospitality in Gen 18 (see chapter 2).

source(s) that may have influenced the NT's use of the OT in general and 2 Pet 2:7–8 in particular. If exegetical warrant indeed lies at the root of Peter's characterization of Lot as a righteous man, it is naïve to assume that a Jewish author such as Peter would have read Gen 19 in isolation, especially when there is clear evidence to suggest that Gen 19 was composed in light of and reused by other analogical narratives in the OT.<sup>58</sup> At a minimum, then, fully accounting for Peter's characterization of Lot involves attending to *all* the OT texts in conversation with Gen 19 which affect Lot's characterization therein.

The provisional criteria outlined above are intended to ensure that the nature of the current project stays thoroughly author-oriented. Put negatively, while 'parallelomania' is always a danger, the criteria laid out in this chapter has the potential to mitigate the risk of falling into the kind of reader-oriented intertextuality that characterizes modern literary studies. Thus as we move forward in pursuing the best possible explanation for Peter's characterization of Lot as a righteous man in 2 Pet 2:7–8, we aim to rigorously apply the preceding criteria in order that our analysis will be governed and constrained by the phenomena within the texts themselves rather than the predilections of the reader.

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<sup>58</sup> See chapters 2–3.



## Chapter 2

### THE CHARACTERIZATION OF LOT IN 2 PETER 2:7–8 AND GENESIS 19

The purpose of this chapter is to survey and evaluate the diverse positions on Lot's characterization in 2 Pet 2:7–8 and Gen 19. Before surveying the interpretive landscape of 2 Pet 2:7–8 and Gen 19, it is necessary to analyze first the Greek grammar, discourse grammar, and syntax of 2 Pet 2:7–8, if only to clarify the nature of Lot's distress and torment and their relationship to the claim of Lot's righteousness. The scope of our strict exegetical analysis is intentionally narrow, intended only to comment on those aspects of the Greek text that might have a bearing on the interpretation of Lot's characterization as righteous.

#### 2.1 EXEGESIS OF 2 PETER 2:7–8

2 Pet 2 begins with a warning against false teachers that extends through the end of the chapter. Peter asserts that although the infiltration of false teachers into the church is inevitable, so is their destruction (2:1–3). For Peter, history provides a certain sense of continuity: just as God judged the angels, Noah's generation, and the Sodomites when they sinned (2:4–6), so the destruction of false teachers is assured (2:9b–10a, 12–13a, 17b, 22). Yet, among the damned there is always a righteous remnant whom God delivers. This is precisely the context in which Noah and Lot are referenced. God will be no less faithful “to rescue the godly from trials” (2:9) than he was to Noah and Lot (2:5–8).

καὶ δίκαιον Λώτ καταπονούμενον ὑπὸ τῶν ἀθέσμων ἐν ἀσελγείᾳ ἀναστροφῆς ἐρρύσατο.

The beginning of verse 7 (“and if he rescued Lot...”, NRSV) marks the fourth consecutive conditional frame since 2:4. The presence of καί here signals semantic continuity via the connective sense of the coordinating conjunction.<sup>1</sup> Occurring twelve times<sup>2</sup> within the letter, the root δίκη is part of the larger righteousness theme in 2 Peter.<sup>3</sup> Significantly, in the span of these two verses the adjectival form δίκαιος occurs three times, in each case characterizing Lot. While the attributive passive participle καταπονούμενον modifies Λώτ, less clear is the sense of Lot’s “distress”. Does καταπονούμενον here refer to an inner, psychological distress, or to “the ill-treatment or oppression that someone suffers”?<sup>4</sup> Although the latter sense enjoys wider textual support,<sup>5</sup> in light of the parenthetical comment in v. 8 an internal “distress” better fits the immediate context.<sup>6</sup> The interpretive upshot is that Lot is being depicted as a man who was internally distressed by the conduct (ἀναστροφῆς) of the Sodomites.

The prepositional phrase ἐν ἀσελγείᾳ modifies ἀναστροφῆς to show either reference or manner; in both cases the nature of the “conduct” of the “lawless” is further specified. The verb ῥύομαι, which occurs also in v. 9, means “to rescue from

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<sup>1</sup> See Runge 2010, 23–27; Levinsohn 2000, 124–26; Porter 1994, 211–12; Wallace 1996, 671.

Köstenberger, Merkle, Plummer 2016, 411–12.

<sup>2</sup> 2 Pet 1:1, 13; 2:5, 7–9, 13, 15, 21; 3:13.

<sup>3</sup> Green 2008, 257.

<sup>4</sup> Green 2008, 259, drawing from 3 Macc. 2:2, 13; T. Levi 6.9; Diodorus Siculus 11.6.3; Josephus, *J. W.* 2.15.1 §313; *Ant.* 7.6.2 §124; Acts 7:24.

<sup>5</sup> See n. 4 above.

<sup>6</sup> Davids 2006, 230; Schreiner 2003, 342; Moo 1996, 105; Richard 2000, 358; Reicke 1964, 165; *pace* Green 2008, 259.

danger”;<sup>7</sup> and of its seventeen occurrences in the NT God is always the implied subject.<sup>8</sup> Thus Lot, rather than having been rescued from the direct oppression of an abusive people, was most fundamentally rescued from God’s impending wrath—which in turn rescued him from that which distressed him internally: the lawless conduct of the Sodomites.<sup>9</sup>

βλέμματι γὰρ καὶ ἀκοῇ ὁ δίκαιος ἐγκατοικῶν ἐν αὐτοῖς ἡμέραν ἐξ ἡμέρας ψυχὴν δικαίαν ἀνόμοις ἔργοις ἐβασάνιζεν.

The presence of the coordinating conjunction γὰρ here signals the addition of explanatory background material to the assertion in v. 7.<sup>10</sup> This, along with the imperfect ἐβασάνιζεν, indicates an offline comment by the author, and so warrants the inclusion of parenthesis in most English translations.<sup>11</sup> 2 Pet 2:8, then, merely elaborates on Lot’s internal distress mentioned in the preceding verse.<sup>12</sup>

The admittedly difficult syntax begins with the expression βλέμματι γὰρ καὶ ἀκοῇ (lit. “in/by seeing and hearing”), which serves as a dative of instrument modifying

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<sup>7</sup> BDAG, 907.

<sup>8</sup> Matt 6:13; 27:43; Luke 1:74; Rom 7:24; 11:26; 15:31; 2 Cor 1:10 (3x); Col 1:13; 1 Thess 1:10; 2 Thess 3:2; 2 Tim 3:11; 4:17-18; 2 Pet 2:7, 9; cf. the use of ῥύομαι in Wis 10:6, 9, 13, 15, especially v. 6 with reference to Lot.

<sup>9</sup> Davids 2006, 230.

<sup>10</sup> Runge 2010, 51–54; Levinsohn 2000, 91–93; Porter 1994, 207–08; Köstenberger, Merkle, Plummer 2016, 411–13.

<sup>11</sup> See, e.g., RSV, NRSV, ESV, NASB, NIV, NKJV, HCSB.

<sup>12</sup> Bauckham 1983, 253; Davids 2006, 230; Schreiner 2003, 342; Moo 1996, 105; Richard 2000, 358; Donelson 2010, 245.

the main verb ἐβασάνιζεν.<sup>13</sup> Notably, ἐβασάνιζεν is in the active voice, which Peter may have used intentionally to implicate Lot as the one responsible for his own torment; he tortured his own “righteous soul” by choosing to live among the Sodomites “day after day”.<sup>14</sup> The subject of the main verb is the substantival adjective δίκαιος (now the second affirmation of Lot’s righteousness in vv. 7–8).

The main verb ἐβασάνιζεν is further modified by the temporal participle ἐγκατοικῶν (“for that righteous man, residing/living...”).<sup>15</sup> Lot’s experience living among the Sodomites (ἐν αὐτοῖς) is heightened by the expression ἡμέραν ἐξ ἡμέρας (“day after day”).<sup>16</sup> That the direct object of Lot’s torment is his “soul” (ψυχὴν, modified by the attributive adjective δικαίαν) bolsters the claim that the author has Lot’s internal distress in view, as does mention of Lot being tormented by way of his “seeing and hearing” (βλέμματι...καὶ ἀκοῇ).<sup>17</sup> By mentioning that the cause of Lot’s distress was the Sodomites’ “lawless deeds” (ἀνόμοις ἔργοις), Peter seems to be highlighting the internal anguish Lot experienced from having to observe immoral actions that disturb one’s conscience. Though the noun ἄνομος can refer more generally to behavior contrary to any law, in the present context Peter’s application of the term to the Sodomites makes it more likely to refer to violation of God’s moral

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<sup>13</sup> Davids 2011, 73; Schreiner 2003, 342; Donelson 2010, 245; Giese suggests that “He [Peter] communicates greater intensity by the incorporation of two of Lot’s senses, ‘by seeing and hearing’ (βλέμματι...καὶ ἀκοῇ)” (2012, 124).

<sup>14</sup> Moo 1996, 105; cf. Donelson 2010, 245.

<sup>15</sup> Green, drawing on Herodotus 4.204 and Josephus, *Ag. Ap.* 1.33 §296, claims that this verb “places more emphasis on his alien status than κατοικέω (*katoikeō*, reside), which describes Lot’s residence in the city in Gen. 19:29 LXX. Lot was among them but not of them” (2008, 261).

<sup>16</sup> Green 2008, 261.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*; Bauckham 1983, 253.

law which operated before the giving of the law at Sinai, and which demanded universal obedience from every people and nation.<sup>18</sup> These syntactical observations together suggest that for Peter, Lot's internal anguish was characteristic of his daily experience, rather than, say, the moment at which Lot confronted the angry mob and offered to handover his two daughters. In its immediate context v. 8 heightens Lot's internal distress, probably in order to establish a stronger connection between Lot's experience and the experience of Peter's readers, who, like Lot, are among the *righteous* whom God will ultimately rescue from their wicked surroundings (albeit in a different way).<sup>19</sup> Lot is thus brought into Peter's discussion of false teachers because he is a figure who fittingly displays God's faithfulness to discriminate between the righteous whom he saves and the wicked whom he judges.

## 2.2 THE CHARACTERIZATION OF LOT IN 2 PETER 2:7-8: A SURVEY AND EVALUATION OF RECENT SCHOLARSHIP

J. Kelly once claimed, "This whitewashing [i.e., the description of Lot as 'righteous' in v. 7] is to be attributed to the fact that, since the Messiah was to trace his descent through David from Ruth the Moabitess, the unseemly union of Lot with his daughters which is described in Gen. xix. 30-38 and which had resulted in the birth of Moab was interpreted by some rabbis as having served a providential purpose."<sup>20</sup> Although Kelly's reason for the so-called "whitewashing" of Lot has gone largely

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<sup>18</sup> BDAG, 85.

<sup>19</sup> Bauckham 1983, 253; Davids 2014, 220; Richard 2000, 358; Donelson 2010, 245.

<sup>20</sup> Kelly 1969, 334.

unfollowed, several contemporary commentators agree in viewing Peter's description of Lot in 2 Pet 2:7–8 as a case of haggadic development that no extant source warrants.<sup>21</sup> In this way Peter's comments go well beyond the biblical text. While later Jewish tradition considers Lot righteous (e.g., Wis 10:6), there is nothing in Jewish tradition which suggests that Lot was distressed by Sodom's immorality. Some wonder, however, whether Lot's conflict with the Sodomites at the door of his house, which "is certainly evidence of distress," could have served as the origin of later traditions concerning Lot's anguish over Sodom's immorality.<sup>22</sup>

Others see Peter's claim that Lot was "righteous" as a natural deduction from Abraham's plea in Gen 18:22–33: "[w]hile not enough righteous were found to spare Sodom, Lot himself was delivered, implying that at least he was righteous."<sup>23</sup> J. Charles affirms that in Gen 18:16–33 Lot's righteousness "can be indirectly attributed to Abraham's pleading with God," though he adds that "[c]ontrast, not essential nature, is the point of the Lot typology."<sup>24</sup> W. Lyons, on the other hand, insists that Lot's deliverance is "a salvation that Lot's iniquity precludes from being the result of the argument of 18:22–32."<sup>25</sup> Still others suggest that Lot's

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<sup>21</sup> Davids 2006, 230; Keating 2011, 162; Reese claims that the language in v. 8 "is not echoed in any other existing literature prior to 2 Peter" (2007, 152); cf. also Bauckham: "Jewish haggadic traditions are reflected in vv 5, 7, and probably 8" (1983, 247); Donelson likewise believes that "haggadic developments of the conflict between Lot and Sodom" must have existed at some point (2010, 245).

<sup>22</sup> Donelson 2010, 245.

<sup>23</sup> Green 2008, 258; so too Alexander 1985, 290–291; Schreiner, 2003, 341–42.

<sup>24</sup> Charles 1997, 88.

<sup>25</sup> Lyons 2012, 11.

righteousness is better understood as an instance of God's imputed righteousness.<sup>26</sup>

In addition to these competing interpretations, two studies deserve special mention.

T. Alexander asserted that "it is now possible to pinpoint *with precision* the origin of the Lot tradition found in 2 Pet 2:8-9."<sup>27</sup> After observing how later literature (e.g., *1 Clem* 11:1, *Pirqe R. El.* 25) views Lot positively because of his hospitality, noting especially Rabbi Jehudah's connection between Lot's hospitality and that of Abraham's, Alexander examines the overt correspondences between the opening events of Gen 18–19. In particular, both Abraham and Lot are seated when the visitors approach, "Abraham at the door of his tent (18:1); Lot at the gate of the city (19:1)." Both men get up to greet the strangers, then bow in homage, after which they extend hospitality (18:2–5; 19:1–3). "Even their speeches correspond closely," Alexander remarks. Both Abraham and Lot mention food, shelter, and water for washing the visitors' feet (18:3–5; 19:2). From these parallels Alexander concludes that the author of Genesis is intentionally comparing Lot with Abraham,<sup>28</sup> and since Abraham "is commended for his generosity," Lot too is "to be viewed in a favorable light." Alexander therefore concludes, "Lot's hospitality is a mark of his righteousness," which is "surely the source of the tradition noted above."

Alexander further argues that the author's view of Lot as a righteous man can be seen in Gen 19:29, where God's deliverance of Lot is in direct response to God

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<sup>26</sup> E.g., Makujina 257, quoting Sailhamer 1992, 172; Moo 1996, 105.

<sup>27</sup> Alexander 1985, 291, my emphasis; the citations that follow, *ibid.*, 290; cf. the helpful chart of the correspondences between Abraham and Lot in Peleg 2012, 144–45.

<sup>28</sup> Contra Safren, who argues that the author's intention is not to contrast the behavior of Abraham and Lot, but rather the behavior of the "angels" (2012, 164–76).

“remember[ing]” Abraham, a remark which recalls Abraham’s extended dialogue in 18:22–33. As Alexander puts it, “he [Abraham] feels obliged to posit his case for Lot’s deliverance not on the grounds of *kinship* but rather on the grounds of *righteousness*—a fact highlighted by the recurrence of the term *ṣaddîq* (“righteous”) in vv 22–28.”<sup>29</sup> While Alexander acknowledges that not all of Lot’s actions in Gen 19 should be condoned, “Lot’s predicament calls for a sympathetic understanding rather than a harsh condemnation.”

J. Makujina makes a compelling case that the source of Peter’s “paraenetic expansion” in 2 Pet 2:8 may have been a textual variant in the Septuagint.<sup>30</sup> Septuagint Gen 19:16 begins with the clause *καὶ ἐταράχθησαν* (“And they were troubled”), which stands in place of the MT’s *וַיִּתְמַמֶּה* (“But he [Lot] procrastinated/hesitated”). Since the semantic domain of *ταράσσω* is wider than the notion of “to trouble,” it is difficult to say with certainty what specific nuance the Septuagint translator had in mind. Although Makujina prefers Brenton’s translation (“troubled”), he considers the question “moot” because regardless of the Septuagint translator’s nuance it “would not have hindered him [i.e., Peter] from selecting the nuance that he preferred or felt the word must carry.”

The crux of Makujina’s argument is the observation that the punctuation of all the major versions of the Septuagint “was still in its infancy” and therefore subject to

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<sup>29</sup> Alexander 1985, 291, author’s emphasis; the quote that follows, *ibid.*

<sup>30</sup> Makujina 1998, 255–69; the remarks that follow, *ibid.*; the quotation and translations that follow, *ibid.*, 259.



error.<sup>31</sup> Thus, while the Septuagint places the period after πόλεως, marking the end of Gen 19:15 (Ἀναστὰς λαβὲ τὴν γυναῖκά σου καὶ τὰς δύο θυγατέρας σου, ἃς ἔχεις, καὶ ἔξελθε, ἵνα μὴ συναπόλῃ ταῖς ἀνομίαις τῆς πόλεως.<sup>16</sup> καὶ ἐταράχθησαν...), Makujina suggests placing the punctuation after συναπόλῃ, which yields the following reading: “Arise, take your wife and two daughters, which you have, and go out lest you also be destroyed. They were also troubled because of the lawlessness of the city.” Accordingly, Makujina reads the dative phrase ταῖς ἀνομίαις τῆς πόλεως causally, which renders a sentence “that has some resemblance to 2 Pet 2:8, without mutilating, either grammatically or logically, either of the clauses in the Septuagint.” He further claims that “[t]he suggested reading in the Septuagint can be understood as indicating that Lot, among others, was inwardly grieved and distressed by the lawless deeds of the city, similar to Peter’s description in 2:7-8.” To further bolster his point, Makujina, drawing on the work of J. Doeve and others, argues that Peter’s hermeneutical milieu would have “no qualms about dividing a sentence in the manner described above in order to unmask the meaning of a text or to find a preconceived meaning there.” That Peter may have been simply drawing from his memory of the Septuagint text is also a possibility. In any case, the presence of ταρασσῶ in Gen 19:16 “may have been the source for the midrash on Lot’s torment.”<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> Ibid., 260; the quotations that follow, *ibid.*

<sup>32</sup> Ibid., 268; Schreiner, however, claims that “it is difficult to sustain the notion that Peter was using the LXX of Gen 19:16 in 2 Peter. The evidence is insufficient to warrant such a conclusion” (2003, 342 n. 54), though on what basis the evidence is insufficient he does not say.

### 2.2.1 Evaluation

Several of the positions above are viable explanations for various elements of Peter's characterization of Lot. As Bauckham and others note, perhaps Peter's comments are due to haggadic development. Or perhaps Peter's understanding of Lot's righteousness stems from an exegetical deduction from Abraham's plea in Gen 18:22–33. That Lot's Abraham-like hospitality in Gen 19:1–3 would seem (initially) to characterize Lot as a righteous man is convincing, yet Alexander engages in special pleading when he fails to grapple with the ethical implications of Lot's questionable actions in the rest of the Sodom narrative. In contradistinction to these views, Makujina provides a refreshingly precise hypothesis for the source of the parenthetical comment in 2 Pet 2:8, one which we acknowledge as having potential import for Peter's understanding of Lot's righteousness. We move forward with the assumption that one or more of these possibilities may have influenced Peter's characterization of Lot to one degree or another.<sup>33</sup>

## 2.3 THE CHARACTERIZATION OF LOT IN GENESIS 19: A SURVEY AND EVALUATION OF RECENT SCHOLARSHIP

While scholarship is divided over the nature of Lot's moral character in the Sodom narrative, it remains to be seen whether Lot's characterization therein could sufficiently account for Peter's characterization in 2 Pet 2:7–8. Since Alexander's

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<sup>33</sup> Notably, we reject the sort of overreaching committed by Alexander: "it is now possible to pinpoint *with precision* the origin of the Lot tradition found in 2 Pet 2:8-9" (1995, 291, emphasis added).

thesis is representative of those who argue for a positive depiction of Lot's moral character in Gen 19, we turn to consider the possibility that Gen 19 presents Lot as either (1) an unrighteous man or (2) a man whose moral portrait is nuanced, complex, and mixed. In what follows, analysis of Lot's moral character is largely restricted to Gen 19, inasmuch as it provides the fullest development of Lot in the OT.

### 2.3.1 Lot as an Unrighteous Man

Given the portrayal of Lot in the Abraham cycle,<sup>34</sup> the idea that Lot could be viewed as a righteous man, whether on Alexander's account or any other, has not gone unchallenged.<sup>35</sup> Some consider Lot self-centered in choosing the Jordan Valley as his dwelling place (Gen 13:11–12), a place renowned for its wickedness; by being captured Lot risks Abraham's life (14:12), and later Lot puts his daughters' lives at risk when he offers them to the men of Sodom (19:8); he disobeys the direct commands of his visitors to leave Sodom; and he "fathers two peoples who will continually be at strife with Israel."<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> Lot is mentioned thirty-three times in the OT, thirty of which occur in the Abraham cycle (Gen 11:27–25:11). The other three occurrences are Deut 2:9, 19; Ps 83:9, wherein Lot is mentioned in passing as the father of a nation.

<sup>35</sup> E.g., Keil and Delitzsch 1980, 233; Coats 1983, 141, 143; Gros Louis 1988, 123–129; Alter 1990, 152; Turner 1990a, 94–95; Gossai 2010, 56–77; what may be the most adamant opposition to the notion of Lot as a righteous man is offered by Jeansonne 1988, 123–29.

<sup>36</sup> Jeansonne 1988, 128; cf. Gossai, who largely follows Jeansonne's analysis of Lot's characterization, though with the qualification, "[r]ighteousness' here and indeed elsewhere in the narrative is a gift from Yahweh" (2010, 56–7).

If Alexander finds Lot righteous on the basis of his correspondences with Abraham in the opening scenes of Gen 18–19, here some see only contrasts that serve to paint Lot in a negative light.<sup>37</sup> For example, “When Abraham caught a glimpse of the messengers, he ‘ran to meet them’ (Gen 18:2); Lot simply ‘rose to meet them’ (19:1) displaying no effort to go in haste.”<sup>38</sup> Moreover, whereas Abraham asks permission to serve the visitors (18:3), Lot appears more demanding, insofar as he tells the men to come to his home “without any humbling statement or qualifier (19:2).” Whereas Abraham offers the men rest and food (18:4–5), initially Lot only offers the men rest (19:2). Even the meal that Abraham provides “is much more elaborately fashioned than the one at Lot’s residence”: Abraham tells Sarah to take “three seahs of fine flour” and “knead it” (18:6),<sup>39</sup> whereas Lot merely makes unleavened bread without ever asking his wife or daughters to prepare anything.<sup>40</sup> Finally, the narrative adds that Abraham prepared a tender calf and along with it brought curds and milk (18:7–8), whereas “[i]n contrast, the description of the meal Lot has prepared is glanced over in haste.”<sup>41</sup> For some, these contrasts establish Lot’s

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<sup>37</sup> For the observations and quotations that follow, see Jeansonne 1988, 126.

<sup>38</sup> So too Gossai: “From the very beginning of the story, even as the scene is set for us, the narrator intentionally alerts us to the startling lack of urgency in Lot’s actions” (2010, 56). Central to Gossai’s analysis is the distinction between Abraham’s “urgency” to serve the visitors and Lot’s overall “hurriedness,” which “is more suggestive of sloppiness, and perhaps here the pursuing of one’s own agenda” (2010, 57 n. 5).

<sup>39</sup> MT: ויאמר מהרי שלש סאים קמח סלת לוי ועשי עגות (“And he said, ‘Hurry! Three seahs of fine flour! Knead it and make cakes!’”); cf. LXX: εἶπεν αὐτῇ Σπεῦσον καὶ φύρασον τρία μέτρα σεμιδάλεως καὶ ποιήσον ἐγχαυφίας (“And he said to her, ‘Hurry and mix three measures of fine flour and make cakes baked in ashes.’”).

<sup>40</sup> Here Jeansonne fails to include that in the same verse (19:3) the texts mention Lot preparing a “feast” (משתה; LXX πότον); cf. Westermann’s translation, “meal” (1985, 295).

<sup>41</sup> Over against this position, Rudin-O’Brasky suggests, “The shortness of this description is not meant to diminish Lot in comparison with his uncle, since the narrator emphasizes Lot’s concern for

relative unrighteousness with respect to Abraham, as do Lot's actions in the rest of Gen 19.

#### 2.3.1.1 Evaluation

The foregoing analysis of the opening scenes of Gen 18–19 is problematic on several fronts. First, that Abraham “ran to meet [the visitors]” (וירץ לקראתם) while Lot merely “rose to meet them” (ויקם לקראתם) is better explained by the place and time of the narrative setting.<sup>42</sup> In Gen 18:2, the position of the three men relative to Abraham is described with the words נצבים עליו. While some translations suggest a close proximity between the two parties at the time of meeting (e.g., “standing in front of him” [RSV], “standing beside him” [NJPS]), the picture of Abraham running (or perhaps “rush[ing]”) to meet the visitors implies some distance between the two parties. Thus a translation such as “standing over against him” is to be preferred.<sup>43</sup> Lot's vantage point from the city gate in the evening (19:1), however, places him in close proximity to visitors coming through the city gates, which would obviate the need for Lot to run to greet the travelers. By the time Lot noticed the visitors they

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his guests and his efforts to save them from the men of the city (vv. 4–11)” (1982, 108, quoted in and translated by Peleg 2012, 146 n. 45).

<sup>42</sup> For the observations and quotations that follow, see Safren 2012, 165–67. It should be noted again (see n. 28 above) that Safren claims the author's intention in these opening episodes is to contrast the behavior of the angels rather than Abraham and Lot. As we will come to see in chapter 3, however, analogical narratives give way to warranted readings of several character comparisons, not simply a primary set of characters. Given the analogical structure of these narratives, it is reasonable to assume that the author intended to compare and/or contrast the behaviors of both the angels and Abraham and Lot.

<sup>43</sup> This translation is proposed by Safren, who reconstructs the scene as follows: “[the visitors] were standing some distance away, probably by the road, at or near the turn to his tent, and Abraham wanted to intercept them before they passed on, as it did not appear to him that they were coming his way” (2012, 166–67).

were already near him. Moreover, in light of the intentional juxtaposition of Abraham and Lot, it is telling that Abraham “bowed to the ground” (וַיִּשְׁתַּחוּ אֶרְצָה), whereas Lot “bowed his face to the ground” (וַיִּשְׁתַּחוּ אָפָיו אֶרְצָה). It is questionable whether here “[t]he narrator purposely intended to indicate that Lot showed greater respect than Abraham toward the strangers,” since the difference may be due merely to common variation in expression; but at the very least the homage Lot pays is on par with Abraham’s.

Second, the discrepancies in the respective offers of hospitality are also due to the difference in the narrative setting and time of day.<sup>44</sup> Although both men suggest that the visitors wash their feet (Gen 18:4; 19:2), Abraham offers his guests water and shade due to the midday heat; and he offers them a “morsel of bread” because such food was appropriate for the midday lunch. Lot’s offer to the visitors to lodge in his home, on the other hand, is merely in keeping with the fact that it is evening, as is Lot’s lack of any offer of a drink.<sup>45</sup> Indeed, Lot’s actions here are more likely a manifestation of his concern for the safety of the travelers, a point particularly germane in light of the claim that Lot’s invitation lacks the same humility as Abraham’s. Since Lot is surely familiar with the wicked behavior of the Sodomites, the brevity of his request and further insistence is appropriate to the narrative circumstance.

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<sup>44</sup> For the observations and quotations that follow, see *ibid.*, 167–69.

<sup>45</sup> Safren attributes the absence of such an offer to the fact that “[t]he sun is setting or has already set, and the Jordan Plain cools down very rapidly, so he does not immediately offer a drink” (2012, 168); cf. Turner 1990a, 91.

Third, the discrepancies in the meals offered by both hosts are better explained (again) by the respective time of day and circumstances.<sup>46</sup> The extended description of Abraham's preparations of the meal and dividing of the labor (Gen 18:6–8) is in keeping with the fact that Abraham now finds himself in the position to prepare the major meal of the day early. Lot, however, provides his guests with an evening meal. Indeed, “the hour is late,” leaving little time for Lot to feed his unexpected guests. He therefore prepares unleavened bread by himself because, quite simply, it is easy to prepare, requiring no assistance to make. The absence of meat is probably due to the same time constraint: it would have taken too long to prepare. Furthermore, the “drinking-feast” (משתה) is something one might hold for honored guests.<sup>47</sup>

In the end, both Abraham and Lot provide a level of hospitality that goes well beyond what was originally offered. Although Abraham initially offers the travelers “a little water [מעט מים]” and “a morsel of bread [פת לחם]” (18:4–5), and Lot initially offers only lodging (19:2)—both men end up providing their guests with a meal. In doing so “[b]oth hosts offer the best refreshment possible under the circumstances.”

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<sup>46</sup> For the observations and quotations that follow, see Safren 2012, 170–72.

<sup>47</sup> Safren here references Gen 26:30; 2 Sam 3:20, and adds that such drinking-feasts took place in the courts of kings (e.g., 1 Kgs 3:15; Esth 5:6; 7:2, 7–8 [2012, 171 n. 66, 67]); see “משתה,” *HALOT* 2:653.

### 2.3.2 Lot as a Complex, Morally Ambiguous Man

Other scholars contend for a mixed depiction of Lot's moral character in the Genesis narratives, one fraught with less certainty than either of the binary options above.<sup>48</sup>

This characterization has the effect of "cloud[ing] Lot with suspicion," perhaps to show that Lot's deliverance and righteous status stem from God's sheer mercy rather than Lot's merit.<sup>49</sup>

For his part, R. Letellier embraces Alexander's analysis of Lot's righteousness while also acknowledging that "Lot's behavior is not universally regarded as positive, and events depicted in 19,6–8 are not unambiguously consistent with a concept of 'righteousness'."<sup>50</sup> From the moment Lot fails to protect his guests and must be rescued by them, Letellier considers Lot's role "passive" and his behavior "comical".<sup>51</sup> He further argues that the "process of ironic deflation" of Lot's moral character continues in the episode where Lot moves into a cave with his two daughters, becomes drunk by their hand, and unwittingly gets them pregnant (Gen 19:30–38). Here "Lot's passive role as a buffoon is brought to its thematic nadir," such that "Lot becomes 'an ethnological foil' to his truly righteous kinsman Abraham." Letellier concludes: "Lot's story with its processes of irony and role reversal moving to

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<sup>48</sup> E.g., "As a whole the narrative develops Lot in two directions: at times he is well-meaning, perhaps even pious, and at other times ambitious, morally uncommitted, and cowardly" (Makujina 1998, 257); the citation that follows, *ibid.*

<sup>49</sup> Cf. Westermann's more reserved assessment of Lot: "One can be certain of only one trait, namely, that Lot by choosing the sedentary life of a city dweller, exposes himself to the dangers of this life style" (1985, 315, quoted in Letellier 1995, 188 n. 390).

<sup>50</sup> Letellier 1995, 185; cf. Lyons 2002, 223; and Turner 1990a, 93–95, who agree that initially Lot's righteousness is on par with Abraham's in extending hospitality, though both Lyons and Turner regard Lot's intent to sacrifice his daughters as unequivocally wicked; cf. also Wenham 1994, 64.

<sup>51</sup> Letellier 1995, 187; the quote that follows, *ibid.*, appropriating a phrase from Coats 1983, 147.



darkness and complexity presents a shadow counterpart to the open-ended optimism, light and promise of Abraham's."<sup>52</sup>

For Lyons, at the forefront of the contrast between Abraham and Lot is not their moral character, but rather their respective positions in relation to God's promise.<sup>53</sup> He rejects the former contrast because, "[i]f Abraham is understood as a character wavering between righteous and unrighteous behavior, then clearly the contrast between the patriarch and Lot cannot be a contrast on the basis of ethical behavior at all."<sup>54</sup> The true contrast between Lot and Abraham is found in the symbolic significance of their respective locations. Abraham is in Canaan and therefore within the promise, whereas Lot stands outside the promise in Sodom. Lot's distance from Abraham and the promise, moreover, has decreased his ability to recognize YHWH (Gen 19:2), a stark contrast to Abraham who clearly recognizes his divine visitors (18:3).

#### 2.3.2.1 Evaluation

Letellier's nuanced reading of Lot's characterization in Gen 19 does not carry over to his lopsidedly positive characterization of Abraham. Although Letellier is not alone in viewing Abraham exclusively in positive terms,<sup>55</sup> any consistently positive reading of Abraham does not square well with his actions in the first wife-sister

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<sup>52</sup> Letellier 1995, 188.

<sup>53</sup> Cf. Marks: "significant is the virtual elimination of Lot as recipient of the divine promise" (1973, 13, quoted in Gossai 2010, 80); *pace* Turner 1990b, 82.

<sup>54</sup> Lyons 2002, 224.

<sup>55</sup> See, e.g., Driver 1909, 191.

episode (Gen 12:10–20; cf. 20:1–18; 26:1–13), where the reader finds Abraham lying (or at least concealing the whole truth) about Sarah’s marital status. An intriguing possibility results in light of this episode: if Lot learned how to be hospitable from “virtuous Abraham,” then perhaps Lot’s offer of his daughters was the result of a lesson he learned from Abraham giving up his wife to Pharaoh (12:10–20).<sup>56</sup> In any case, neither Abraham nor Lot is presented as a flat, one-dimensional figure. At times both men exhibit characteristics that are praiseworthy—and at other times blameworthy. As for Lyons’s dichotomy: it need not be constructed, since (1) the juxtaposition of two individuals does not necessitate that one of them be morally blameless; and (2) Lot’s position outside of the promise and his inability to recognize YHWH are the result of Lot’s *moral* choices.

### 2.3.3 The Nature of the Sodomites’ Request and Sin(s)<sup>57</sup>

In any discussion of Lot’s characterization in Gen 19, there is much that turns on the question of the nature of the crowd’s request in 19:5. The upshot of Lot’s characterization is affected by (for instance) whether Lot’s decision to offer his daughters is viewed as a pledge in response to a routine investigation, or whether the offer is an instance of a man gratuitously sacrificing his daughters to a potentially

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<sup>56</sup> Lyons 2002, 224.

<sup>57</sup> A full survey of the panoply of positions on this question is well beyond the scope of the present study, and could be a standalone thesis in its own right. What follows in this section is both selective and representative. For an extensive bibliography on the three main positions, see Doyle 1998, 84–85.

violent (perhaps sexually so) mob. While the longest-standing view is that the men<sup>58</sup> of Sodom wanted “to know” Lot’s guests sexually, some relatively recent proposals have challenged the traditional understanding of the Sodomites’ request.<sup>59</sup>

S. Morschauser argues that the Sodomites’ request “to know” Lot’s guests was simply an act of further investigation into the identity and intentions of the two men, lest they be enemy spies, for example.<sup>60</sup> There is nothing inherently sexual in nature about the Sodomites’ demand; they are merely requesting that the visitors be turned over in order to be interrogated. Lot, however, objects to their request on the basis of his position as a city official (i.e., as a ‘gate-keeper’)—an official who has pledged legal protection to his guests, which also serves as a kind of temporary house-arrest that safeguards the surrounding community. Since standard interrogation in the Ancient Near East could often be quite brutal, it is not unlikely that Lot’s objection to the crowd’s request is a sincere effort to avoid the possibility of his guests being treated harshly. To reassure the Sodomites that his guests pose no threat to the community, Lot offers his daughters in exchange as hostages, who are then to be held in safekeeping until Lot’s guests depart the following morning.<sup>61</sup> Tragically, the Sodomites reject Lot’s offer and accordingly abandon the rule of law,

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<sup>58</sup> The question as to whether the “men of Sodom” included women need not detain us here, nor does it bear on Lot’s response to the crowd.

<sup>59</sup> E.g., Morschauser 2003; Boswell 1980, 93–95; White 1995, 20; Bailey 1975, 3–4; for the intriguing suggestion that the Sodomites intended to sexually abuse Lot’s guests as a punishment for the crime of improperly accepting an invitation of hospitality from a “foreigner,” see Matthews 1992, 5, who in support cites Middle Assyrian Law Code and 2 Sam 10:1–5.

<sup>60</sup> Morschauser 2003; the observations that follow, *ibid.*

<sup>61</sup> In this sense Morschauser claims that Lot’s daughters are regarded as “exceedingly valuable,” since they are to be handed over “in *equal exchange*” for the visitors (2003, 474, *italics original*).

thus meriting divine punishment. In short: their inhospitality justifies divine judgment.

#### 2.3.3.1 Evaluation

While Morschauser's thesis and the evidence he marshals deserve serious consideration, several details of the immediate and surrounding contexts do not fit well within his overall picture, and are better accounted for by the traditional interpretation. One wonders, for instance, how well inhospitality, even to its worst degree, can account for the negative portrayal of Sodom in Gen 13:13 (ואנשי סדם רעים וחטאים ליהוה מאד) ["Now the men of Sodom were wicked, great sinners against the Lord"] or the level of "outcry" against Sodom and Gomorrah—so great as to reach the heavens—as expressed in 18:20–21.<sup>62</sup> Given such strong language, let alone the severity of the judgment, it is reasonable to suspect that the transgressions of the Sodomites (in general, at least) would far exceed inhospitality. That "this incident is utilized to characterize the depth of depravity of Sodom and Gomorrah"<sup>63</sup> would further seem to preclude inhospitality as that which most fundamentally characterizes the profound degree of the citizens' wickedness.

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<sup>62</sup> Cf. the negative evaluation in Jer 23:14; Ezek 16:46–50; Jude 7.

<sup>63</sup> Davidson 2007, 148; cf. Gagnon, "since the story is used as a type scene to characterize the depth of human depravity in Sodom and Gomorrah and thus to legitimate God's decision to wipe these two cities off the face of the map, it is likely that the sin of Sodom is not merely inhospitality or even attempted rape of a guest but rather attempted homosexual rape of male guests" (2001, 75). For an extensive argument that homosexuality was a fundamental aspect of the Sodomites' sin, see Gagnon 2001, 71–91; cf. also Hamilton 1995, 34; Letellier 1995, 146–47; Loader 1990, 37; Fields 1997, 122–23; Wenham 1994, 55.

On another level, to interpret the Sodomites' request in Gen 19:5 in a way that is not sexual in nature disrupts a key literary motif that ties together the three intervening episodes from the announcement of the promise of Isaac's birth (17:19) to its fulfillment (21:1–7), namely, the promise-in-jeopardy motif that is intertwined with the narratives about Sodom and Gomorrah (18–19), the incest of Lot and his daughters (19:30–38), and the second wife-sister episode involving King Abimelech of Gerar (20). Critical to this argument, advanced by R. Alter,<sup>64</sup> is the identification of what Alter calls “the annunciation type-scene,” which is comprised of (1) a woman's barren condition, (2) the annunciation of the birth of a child, and (3) the birth of the son (cf. Gen 25:19–25; Judg 13:1; 1 Sam 1:2; 2 Kgs 4:8–17). In the present context the fulfillment of the birth of the son (Isaac) is interrupted by the three episodes noted above—all of which take up the issue of sexual sin and its corresponding punishment. Significantly, “[s]ince nowhere else are there such interruptions of the annunciation's fulfillment, we are surely entitled to ask what all this has to do with the promise of seed to Abraham.” It is important to observe that the divine imperative to propagate (Gen 1:28) is conditional on moral behavior, a principle clearly evidenced in the Flood account (6–9).<sup>65</sup> In view of the sinful track record of history, it would be “too smooth, too simple” for the author of Genesis to progress directly from the divine promise to Abraham to its fulfillment in the birth of Isaac. Instead, “[u]nusual shadows must be cast over the way to fulfillment,”

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<sup>64</sup> Alter 1986; the observations and quotations that follow, *ibid.*, 32.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*, 36; the observations and quotations that follow, *ibid.*

which in this case are Abraham and Sarah's old age (a "shadow" unique to this annunciation type-scene) and the three intervening episodes mentioned above. These shadows convey a "perilous history" that serves as the "thematically needed prelude" to Isaac's birth.

In addition to building tension in the narrative, these episodes serve a didactic function. The world of Genesis is a world in which the rampant sexual immorality of a society can lead to its destruction by divine judgment (19:1–29); propagating outside of God's will is "a kind of grim parody of the primeval command to be fruitful and multiply" (19:30–38); and an entire kingdom might be struck sterile due to the sheer danger of "illicit sexuality." The overall effect of this "prelude" is that it frames the scene in which Isaac is born as a "checkered one" wherein Isaac's offspring "will have troubles enough of their own, in regard to both moral performance and physical survival."

At the risk of belaboring the point: to interpret the Sodomites' request as innocuous, or the nature of their transgression as mere inhospitality, is to sever the Sodom and Gomorrah narrative from part of the larger literary argument in Gen 17–21, in which certain *sexual* modes of behavior pose as model threats to the fulfillment of God's former promises to Abraham. Placed in its current narrative context, then, Sodom "becomes the great monitory model, the myth of a terrible collective destiny antithetical to Israel's."

It is no less significant that when the author of Judges intends to underscore the severe depravity *within* Israel (i.e., the tribe of Benjamin), he maps his account (Judg

19) onto Gen 19.<sup>66</sup> Here, however, in the absence of divine intervention (e.g., Gen 19:10–11), the Benjaminite men violently gang rape the Levite’s concubine, culminating in her death the following morning (Judg 19:25–28). Morschauser sees no difference between the request of the Sodomites and the Benjaminites. In both cases the legal background is the same, and a legal exchange is being offered, though Morschauser admits that events go “horrendously wrong.”<sup>67</sup> He further notes the circularity in proponents of the traditional view deriving their understanding of ידע in Gen 19:5 from Judg 19:22, and vice versa.<sup>68</sup>

Here, too, Morschauser’s reconstruction is unconvincing, since he fails to account for the rather massive and abrupt moral transition from a mere request to interrogate (however abusively) to all out gang rape and murder. That things went “horrendously wrong” is without doubt, but the very logic of the Benjaminites’ sexual violence is better accounted for if the reader interprets the request of these “worthless men” (בני בליעל) as a manifestation of their depraved sexual intentions. Within the larger argument of the Book of Judges, it is not as though the author sought to recount an instance of things getting (way) out of hand, so much as he sought to bring Israel’s moral digression to its climax by demonstrating how the most unthinkable acts of Godless foreigners are now to be found *within Israel*, since “[i]n those days there was no king in Israel. Everyone did what was right in his own

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<sup>66</sup> This of course assumes, rather than argues, that the direction of literary dependence is from Gen 19 to Judg 19.

<sup>67</sup> Morschauser 2003, 477.

<sup>68</sup> Cf. the lexical analysis of ידע by Pirson 2012, who also concludes that the verb has no sexual meaning in Gen 19:5, though throughout his analysis suffers from begging the question.

eyes.”<sup>69</sup> The nature of the Sodomites’ request in Gen 19:5 is therefore best understood in terms of a deviant intention “to know” Lot’s guests sexually, though we can affirm with Westermann that “the narrative combines two crimes, each of which is serious in itself: unnatural lust (Lev. 18:22) and the violation of the right of guests to protection.”<sup>70</sup>

#### 2.3.4 The Nature of Lot’s Offer of His Daughters

If the above conclusion holds true, the ethics of Lot’s offer of his daughters is still not as straightforward as one might suppose. Indeed, “it is difficult to say from the story’s perspective how much of Lot’s desire to give up his own daughters instead of offering himself is due to plain self-interest, how much is due to a devaluation of women in ancient culture, and how much is due to the revulsion felt for same-sex eroticism.”<sup>71</sup> As we mentioned above, for Alexander “Lot’s predicament calls for a sympathetic understanding rather than a harsh condemnation,” since “we should not judge too harshly a man placed in an extremely dangerous and apparently impossible

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<sup>69</sup> Judg 17:6; 21:25.

<sup>70</sup> Westermann 1985, 301. A less common departure from the traditional view is found among those who argue that, by their request, the Sodomites are seeking access to the divine presence and/or the knowledge of God (see esp. Doyle 2004). Yet even if this can be shown to be true, it must hold true to the exclusion of accessing the divine presence *through* sexual intercourse. Moreover, if the Sodomites’ intention is to access the divine presence, it is rather odd that Lot would so fundamentally misunderstand their request, and odder still that the Sodomites would then threaten Lot with worse treatment than they ostensibly intended to level against the divine beings (Gen 19:19). This view also happens to be vulnerable to the same critique against Morschauser’s thesis: it too (1) severs the Sodom and Gomorrah narrative from part of the literary argument of Gen 17–21 and (2) fails to account adequately for the interpretation and function of Gen 19 in the analogical narrative of Judg 19.

<sup>71</sup> Gagnon 2001, 74–5.



situation.”<sup>72</sup> Westermann, too, exhorts his readers not to condemn “by our standards ... [Lot’s] desperate offer that knows no way out.”<sup>73</sup> Matthews goes so far as to call Lot’s gesture an act of hospitable “extravagance,” inasmuch as Lot’s daughters are “an asset of his household in terms of the bride price they could command and of the children they would produce.”<sup>74</sup>

Other scholars sympathetic to Lot’s predicament nevertheless pass negative judgment on Lot’s offer. G. von Rad, while acknowledging Lot’s “complicated” situation, regards Lot’s offer of his daughters as a moral “compromise.”<sup>75</sup> According to Gossai, the ethics of Lot’s offer is unequivocally clear: “This is a distorted and perverted hospitality, and this sort of protection is actually no protection, for with such flawed priorities, one can surely imagine that even the protection of the stranger would be disposable in the face of some other priority.”<sup>76</sup> Significantly, Lyons, drawing on the work of I. Rashkow, suggests that “the evil nature of Lot’s offer is compounded by the fact that ‘since the daughters are betrothed (19.14), and since the rape of a betrothed woman is a crime punishable by death (Deut 22.23-27), Lot’s actions could have implicated him as an accomplice.”<sup>77</sup>

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<sup>72</sup> Alexander 1985, 291; cf. similarly sympathetic interpretations by Vawter 1977, 235–36; Skinner 1910, 307.

<sup>73</sup> Westermann 1985, 302.

<sup>74</sup> Matthews 1992, 6.

<sup>75</sup> Von Rad 1972, 218; cf. Wenham’s language of an “unfortunate offer” (1994, 56), which he argues was probably shocking to the original audience, causing the narrator to explain immediately Lot’s motives: “only do not do anything to these men for they came under the protection of my roof for this reason” (1994, 55–6).

<sup>76</sup> Gossai 2010, 65.

<sup>77</sup> Lyons 2002, 231, quoting Rashkow 1998, 99.

#### 2.3.4.1 Evaluation

While it is imperative to consider the background and circumstances of any moral choice in order to calibrate better the scales by which one weighs that choice, it is clear here that Lot—at best—exercises poor judgment.<sup>78</sup> His decision to offer his daughters cannot be condoned, irrespective of the degree to which Ancient Near Eastern values and customs may have influenced his choice. There are simply no circumstances or cultural values that could ever morally justify Lot's decision to hand over his daughters to be sexually violated. And as Lyons suggests, had Lot's offer been accepted and the Sodomites followed through with their evil intentions, Lot could have been implicated as an accomplice in a crime punishable by death under Mosaic Law (Deut 22:23–27).

#### 2.4 CONCLUSION

If by Lot's "righteousness" we mean to refer to a certain positive degree of his ethical behavior, then it would appear from the narrative of Gen 19 that Lot's moral character is indeed a mixed bag.<sup>79</sup> No clear, consistent picture emerges that would allow the reader to identify Lot, on the grounds of his behavior, as a wholly righteous or wholly unrighteous individual. In 19:1–3 Lot's hospitality is (at the very least) on par with the hospitality Abraham extended in 18:3–8. Moreover, to his credit Lot places himself in harms way on behalf of his guests by stepping outside

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<sup>78</sup> Gossai 2010, 66.

<sup>79</sup> Discussion as to whether Lot's "righteousness" stems from an imputed righteousness is taken up in chapter 3.

his doors to confront the men of Sodom (19:6–7). Yet Lot’s offering up of his daughters (19:8) cannot be condoned, nor can his “linger[ing]” (מהרה) in Sodom despite the angels’ clear instructions (19:15–16). Lot’s decision to live in a cave reveals that his initial decision to flee to Zoar (19:18–23) was at best uninformed, and at worst unwise. The degree to which Lot remains a victim of his daughter’s seduction is uncertain, but one seems justified to question the level of Lot’s implication in allowing himself to become drunk (19:32–36). Thus Lot’s virtuous actions in Gen 19, especially when juxtaposed with Abraham’s actions in the (analogical) narrative of 18:1–8, are perhaps necessary—though certainly not sufficient conditions for—Peter’s characterization of Lot as a righteous man (2 Pet 2:7–8). Peter’s characterization of Lot in 2 Pet 2:7–8 must therefore be established on other grounds.

While we acknowledged above the possibility that several existing positions may, to one degree or another, account for Peter’s characterization of Lot, they certainly do not exhaust the range of exegetical possibilities that may have served as a source for Peter’s characterization of Lot. To say, for example, that Makujina’s argument is possible, or even plausible, does not necessitate it being true. In the end it may very well be the case that Peter was drawing on a common tradition or source no longer extant.

What follows in the subsequent chapter is an attempt to widen the scope of possibilities of *exegetical* warrant for Peter’s characterization of Lot as righteous. As we have already glimpsed, the stories of the OT are highly analogical, both in their

structure and content, such that the text often invites the reader to ponder anew the (re)characterization of a character in light of a comparison and/or contrast with a different character in another narrative. This phenomenon provides diverse yet complimentary avenues for the interpreter to explore the varied and nuanced ways in which analogical narratives shape the overall portrait and relative function of OT characters.

## Chapter 3

### THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF LOT

Central to this thesis is the observation that the characterization of an OT character is often affected by his or her comparison with another character in the OT, an interpretive move sanctioned by the text itself through its use of (often covert) allusion and analogy. For example, in chapter 2 we observed that the clear parallels between the opening scenes of Gen 18 and 19 summon the reader to compare the hospitality offered by Abraham and Lot, respectively. These inherent features of the text suggest that the reader's evaluation of Lot in Gen 19 is incomplete apart from a comparative reading with Abraham's actions in Gen 18. Put negatively, a full picture of Lot cannot be grasped from Gen 19 alone. In this particular case, we argued that Lot's actions in the opening scene of Gen 19 were at the very least on par with Abraham's actions in the opening scene of Gen 18, and we further suggested that Lot's hospitality might even exceed Abraham's hospitality. The effect of here comparing Lot with Abraham is profound: in Gen 19 Lot is initially portrayed as a man whose behavior is just as, if not more, exemplary than the father of Israel's faith. That Lot could be considered a morally righteous man on the basis of his actions in Gen 19:1–3 seems clear. Yet, in light of Lot's questionable actions in the rest of the narrative, the reader is hard-pressed to maintain a positive outlook on Lot. By the end of the story Lot's drunken state and tacit incestual involvement call his moral character into question, leaving the reader unsure as to the status of Lot's righteousness. What remains to be seen, however, is how, if at all, Lot's

characterization is affected by his literary relationship to an analogous character in another analogical narrative, namely—Noah—and whether the upshot(s) of this literary relationship can adequately account for Peter’s characterization of Lot as “righteous” in 2 Pet 2:7–8.

The purpose of this chapter is to argue for the plausibility of the claim that the source of Lot’s righteousness in 2 Pet 2:7–8 was an exegetical inference from the account of Noah in the Flood narrative. To anticipate: we will begin by establishing the thoroughly analogical nature of the flood and Sodom stories, evidenced by several thematic, structural, and linguistic parallels, which will then pave the way for a discussion concerning the various functions of the shared language between the two narratives, the most significant of which is the particular function of the term צדיק (“righteous”) in each story. This groundwork will then frame our discussion of the effect of Noah’s righteousness on the characterization of Lot. The current project nears its end with a brief consideration of the significance of Noah and Lot being mentioned *together* in Wisdom of Solomon and 2 Peter, followed by some concluding remarks.

### 3.1 THE FLOOD AND SODOM STORIES AS ANALOGICAL NARRATIVES

It is nothing new to suggest that the Sodom narrative shares several similarities with the flood narrative.<sup>1</sup> Perhaps the most accessible analogical fruit for the reader in this

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<sup>1</sup> See, e.g., Clark 1971, 194–95; Wenham 1994, 42–43; Mathews 1996, 363 n. 21; Kaminski 2014, 161–62.

case hangs at the level of broad themes: both narratives concern the rescue of non-Israelites (in particular one man and his family) from the total annihilation of a people by a cataclysmic event.<sup>2</sup> These broad thematic correspondences can be narrowed further. Before both acts of divine judgment, God/the Lord reveals to Abraham and Noah—his covenant vassals—his intention to judge the wicked (Gen 6:13; 18:20–21);<sup>3</sup> amidst a warning of impending judgment, brought about by the citizens' wickedness, both Noah and Lot are given specific instructions to escape the judgment, which in each case includes instructions to bring their families (6:13–21; 19:12–13); in the aftermath of destruction, an incestual offense is committed against Noah and Lot, both of which are victimized without knowing it because of their drunken state, leading to their shame (9:20–25; 19:30–38); and central to the two narratives are questions pertaining to righteousness, divine justice, and repopulation.

Another level of correspondence is evident in the structural similarities of the two narratives. For example, both accounts of judgment are framed by a sexual act or intention. Whereas the deluge is bookended by the “sons of God” taking the “daughters of man” as wives (Gen 6:1–2) and Ham’s incestual offense against his father (9:20–29), the judgment of Sodom and Gomorrah is bookended by the men of Sodom seeking to violate the two visitors (19:4–11) and the incestual offense of Lot’s

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<sup>2</sup> Harland 1996, 49.

<sup>3</sup> It is also telling that in both cases the immediate context involves the concept of covenant. Before the Lord reveals his plans to Abraham, he reiterates his covenant promises to Abraham (18:17–19), whereas after the announcement of judgment in the flood narrative God announces that he will “establish” (קום) his covenant with Noah (6:18).

daughters against their father (19:30–38). The two accounts share a further structural parallel insofar as the offspring of Ham (the Canaanites) and the offspring of Lot (the Ammonites and Moabites) are in view at the end of the respective narratives (9:22, 25; 19:37–38), and inasmuch as both men are explicitly associated with incest at the conclusion of each story.<sup>4</sup>

In addition, several shared locutions call further attention to the analogical nature of the two narratives:

(i) The verb שחַת (“to destroy, corrupt”) occurs eight times in the flood narrative and seven times in the Sodom narrative.<sup>5</sup> In view of the frequent occurrences of שחַת in the OT,<sup>6</sup> its presence would not be as significant were it not for the fact that the term occurs elsewhere in Genesis only in 13:10 and 38:9.<sup>7</sup>

(ii) In both narratives divine assessment of moral corruption is expressed with the concept of divine “seeing” (רָאָה; 6:5, 12; 18:21).

(iii) The adjective צַדִּיק (“righteous”) occurs twice in the flood narrative (6:9; 7:1) and seven times in the Sodom narrative (18:23, 24 [2x], 25 [2x], 26, 28)—a noteworthy observation in light of the fact that צַדִּיק occurs only one other time in Genesis (20:4).

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<sup>4</sup> Cf. Wenham: “the overall structures of the narratives are similar: in both cases the story of the hero’s escape and the destruction of the wicked, told in a carefully worked out palistrophe (6:9–9:17 // 18:16–19:28), is followed by his intoxication and shameful treatment by his children (9:20–27 // 19:30–38)” (1994, 41).

<sup>5</sup> Gen 6:11, 12 (2x), 13, 17; 9:11, 15; 18:28 (2x), 31–32; 19:13 (2x), 14, 29.

<sup>6</sup> Some 168 times, according to Accordance software; 165 times in J. Conrad, TDOT 14: 583.

<sup>7</sup> In the rest of the Pentateuch שחַת occurs only 16 times (Exod 8:20; 21:26; 32:7; Lev 19:27; Num 32:15; Deut 4:16, 25, 31; 9:12, 26; 10:10; 20:19–20; 31:29 [2x]; 32:5).



(iv) A conspicuous sequence of **בוא + סגר** occurs in 7:16 and 19:10. In 7:16, “male and female of all flesh entered” the ark (**זכר ונקבה מכל בשר באו**), after which God “closed” (**סגר**) the ark (presumably its door) in order to protect those inside from the impending judgment. In 19:10 we read that the angels/visitors rescued Lot from the Sodomites when they “brought” (**בוא**) Lot back into his house and “closed the door” (**וואת הדלת סגרו**). Similarly, when Lot went out to bargain with the men of Sodom, he “shut the door” (**והדלת סגר**) behind him, presumably to protect his guests (19:6). In these instances, too, the relative infrequency of the verb **סגר** in Genesis must be taken into account, since it occurs only one other time (2:21).

(v) In 19:10 another correspondence occurs with the clause **וישלחו האנשים את ידם** (“But the men reached out their hands and brought Lot into the house with them”). This clause recalls strikingly similar language in 8:9, where we read that Noah **וישלח ידו ויקחה ויבא אתה אליו אל התבה** (“he reached out his hand and took her [i.e., the dove] and brought her into the ark with him”).

(vi) What is perhaps a more tenuous correspondence occurs between some of the instructions given to Noah and Lot and their respective responses. After the flood waters subside, God commands Noah and his family to “go out from the ark” (**צא מן התבה**), which is akin to the angels instructing Lot to “bring out of the place” (**הוצא מן המקום**) anyone in his family before judgment falls (8:16; 19:12). Potentially more significant, however, is that in both accounts Noah and Lot are said to have obeyed the instructions (**ויצא לוט** [19:14]; **ויצא נח** [8:18]).

(vii) Two of the five<sup>8</sup> occurrences in Genesis of the verb “to rest” (נוח) occur after both judgments: the ark “rested/settled” on the mountains of Ararat (8:4), whereas Lot and his family were seized by the angels and were “set/rested” outside of the city (19:16).

(viii) Noah, Abraham, and Lot all “find” divine “favor”. After The Lord announces the coming judgment in 6:7, v. 8 reads, ונח מצא חן בעיני יהוה (“But Noah found favor in the eyes of the Lord”). Likewise, Abraham would seem to have found divine favor when he asks for it (18:3),<sup>9</sup> since the three men accepted his offer of hospitality (18:5). That Lot claims that he has found favor in the eyes of the angelic visitors suggests that he too had found *divine* favor (הנה נא מצא עבדך חן בעיניך) [“Behold, your servant has found favor in your sight”]; 19:19), inasmuch as the two angels/men are clearly the Lord’s representatives (18:20–22). Significantly, these make up the only instances in Genesis where an individual finds divine favor.<sup>10</sup>

(ix) In both accounts the verb מטיר—used elsewhere in Genesis only in 2:5—is used to express the exercise of divine judgment. In 7:4 God announces, “I will send rain on the earth” (ממטיר על הארץ); and in 19:24 the Lord “rained down” (המטיר) sulfur and fire.

(x) Just as God’s remembrance (זכר) of Abraham resulted in Lot’s deliverance (19:29), so God’s remembrance (זכר) of Noah resulted in the deliverance of those

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<sup>8</sup> Gen 2:15; 8:4; 19:16; 39:16; 42:33

<sup>9</sup> ויאמר אדני אם נא מצאתי חן בעיניך אל נא תעבר מעל עבדך (“And he said, ‘My Lord, if I have found favor in your sight, do not pass by your servant.’”).

<sup>10</sup> Not a few scholars claim that in the OT divine favor is ascribed only to Noah and Moses (see, e.g., Moberly 1983, 71), but as we have shown this fails to account for how Abraham and Lot are ascribed with divine favor, albeit indirectly.

inside the ark (8:1; cf. 9:15–16). Outside of the flood and Sodom narratives, divine remembrance occurs in Genesis only once more (30:22).

(xi) A concern in both narratives for the preservation of offspring is signaled by the verb חיה (“to live”) + the noun זרע (“seed”) in 7:3; 19:32, 34, occurring together in the same context in the Pentateuch on only two other occasions (Gen 47:19; Deut 30:19), and by the combination of בוא (“to come”) + חיה (“to live”) in 6:19–20 (2x); 19:31–34 (2x).

(xii) Both Noah and Lot drank wine (יין) and became drunk (9:20–21; 19:30–38). What 9:21 states explicitly with the verb שכר (“to be/become drunk”) is conveyed in the Sodom narrative with the expression ולא ידע בשכבה ובקומה (“Now he did not know when she lay down or when she arose” [19:33, 35]).

The mere identification of these twelve correspondences is simply intended to show that the correspondences related specifically to Lot (see below) are not isolated or haphazard instances, but rather are characteristic of an analogical patterning that would seem to be part of the warp and woof of the flood and Sodom stories.

Admittedly, not all of these correspondences carry equal weight, neither in terms of establishing a clear case of inner-biblical allusion or echo nor in discerning a direction of dependence. As Wenham notes, however: “By themselves, some of the resemblances between the two stories might be coincidental, but their number suggests that the parallels between the flood and the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah are being deliberately exploited by the author of Genesis. And this observation must inform both the interpretation of the [Sodom] narrative and

discussion of its unity.”<sup>11</sup> At the very least, the sheer number of shared locutions between the two narratives, several of which happen to be relatively rare in Genesis, as well as the overlap in themes and structure, suggest *some* level of conscious analogical patterning in the composition of one or both of the narratives. The perplexity of the question surrounding the direction of dependence is in this case made more acute by both the textual proximity of the narratives and their occurrence within the same book. It is therefore difficult to say with certainty whether the flood and Sodom stories were written (roughly) simultaneously or whether one was later composed and/or reworked in light of the other.<sup>12</sup> Even so, the challenge of directionality in this particular case need not stall analysis of the literary and rhetorical functions of the above correspondences, since the consideration and establishment of such functions can (and often does) transpire in the absence of certainty over the direction of dependence between texts.

### 3.2 THE FUNCTIONS OF SHARED LANGUAGE IN THE FLOOD AND SODOM STORIES

If our working assumption is that some, or even all, of the above correspondences are intentional authorial constructs, what functions might they serve? After all, as Sternberg puts it, “it is not enough to trace a pattern; it must also be validated and justified in terms of communicative design.”<sup>13</sup> Since the scope of the present thesis is

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<sup>11</sup> Wenham 1994, 43. Wenham recognizes several, though not all, of the correspondences noted above.

<sup>12</sup> *Contra* Clark, who suggests that the Sodom narrative served as a model for the structuring of the flood narrative (1971, 195).

<sup>13</sup> Sternberg 1985, 2.

limited to the effect(s) of inner-biblical correspondences on the characterization of Lot, discussion of the twelve correspondences outlined above will be framed in terms of their relevance to Lot's characterization. Moreover, the order in which each of the suggested resemblances will be considered is from those which have the weakest bearing on Lot's characterization to that which has the strongest. The payoff in considering 'weak' correspondences that have little to no bearing on Lot's characterization is that they establish a degree of non-arbitrariness for the correspondence that has a 'strong' bearing on Lot's characterization. In other words, each 'weak' correspondence must be followed to its dead end in order to demonstrate the various grounds on which Lot's righteousness *cannot* be established.

### 3.2.1 The Functions of 'Weak' Correspondences

Among the shared locutions that would seem to have no bearing on Lot's characterization is the repeated use of the verb שחת ("to destroy, corrupt"). In each instance, irrespective of the assumed direction of dependence, the evocation of שחת seems to have no semantic bearing in any of the respective contexts in which it appears in the two stories. At most, then, שחת may function as an echo in one or more of its occurrences in the flood and Sodom narratives, though it is no less reasonable to conclude that the frequency of the term is here due merely to the common subject matter of the two narratives. Or perhaps the term was used intentionally to strengthen the analogical tie between the two narratives so that readers would be more inclined to read the two in light of each other. The analogous

divine actions in both narratives, that is, God’s “seeing” (6:5, 12; 18:21), “raining” (7:4; 19:24), “remembering” (8:1; 19:29), and “resting/setting” (8:4; 19:16) also serve to strengthen the analogical chord between the two narratives (whether intended or not), but nevertheless do not seem to contribute in any direct way to Lot’s characterization. Likewise, the collocations חיה + זרע (7:3; 19:32, 34) and חיה + בוא (6:19–20 [2x]; 19:31–34 [2x]), both of which signal a concern in the narratives for the preservation of offspring, do not seem to influence one’s reading of Lot.

Arguably the strongest lexical and syntactic correspondence occurs with the relatively long locutions in 8:9 and 19:10;<sup>14</sup> in this case 19:10 appears to function as an allusion to 8:9. When one reads in 8:9 that Noah “stretched out his hand and took [the dove] and brought her into the ark with him,” he is right to assume that Noah’s hand is outstretched through the same window through which he sent forth the raven (8:6–7). The narrative sequence is fairly straightforward: the window of the ark is open, the dove returns, and Noah reaches out the window to retrieve the dove. Moreover, in 8:9 the narrative action seems to be portrayed from *outside* the ark, where the dove is unable to find a resting place, and where the waters still cover the earth. The immediately following image of Noah reaching out his hand through the window would then also seem to be portrayed from a view *outside* the ark.

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<sup>14</sup> וישלח ידו ויקחה ויבא אתה אליו אל התבה (“He stretched out his hand and took her and brought her into the ark with him”) // וישלחו האנשים את ידם ויביאו את לוט אליהם הביתה (“But the men stretched out their hands and brought Lot into the house with them and shut the door”).

What is roughly the same lexical and syntactical sequence<sup>15</sup> in 19:10 presents an odd image, however. After Lot goes out to negotiate with the mob outside his door (19:8), the Sodomites threaten him and “drew near to break down the door” (וַיִּגְשׁוּ לְשֹׁבֵר הַדֶּלֶת; 19:9). Notably, as in 8:9, the action leading up to the outstretching of a hand occurs outside; in both accounts the narrative camera, as it were, stands outside the safe haven. Thus the reader has been led to visualize the threatening crowd pressing against Lot, making their way closer to his door to apprehend his guests. As the narrative tension climaxes, the two men/angels inside “reached out their hands” to bring Lot back inside the house (19:10). There is no mention of the door being opened or the men stepping outside to rescue Lot. Instead both men stand inside Lot’s house, and the reader is prompted to picture—from a vantage point outside the house—(at least) two arms abruptly outstretched in order to grab Lot, which, again, is a somewhat odd mental image to behold. Although the sequence of actions could have been depicted in a number of ways, the present clause in 19:10 is kept in tact, in all likelihood to allude back to 8:9. Apart from any consideration of the function of the allusion within the immediate context, at a minimum the allusion strengthens the connection between the flood and Sodom stories by depicting separate events analogously, even if at the cost of a fairly strange

narrative image in 19:10. Within the immediate context, however, the allusion may suggest that Lot's house is a safe haven akin to Noah's ark. While Lot's house undoubtedly gets destroyed in the destruction of Sodom, like the ark it nevertheless serves as a temporary refuge from immediate danger. In each case those dwelling outside risk their safety; but those inside remain secure, awaiting God's deliverance from judgment.<sup>16</sup> If this conclusion holds true, it nonetheless carries little to no significance for Lot's characterization.

A rather overt parallel results from both Noah and Lot becoming drunk at the end of the respective stories (9:20–21; 19:30–38).<sup>17</sup> Whereas Noah became drunk of his own accord (וּשְׁתָּ מִן הַיַּיִן וַיִּשְׁכָּר [“He drank of the wine and become drunk”]; 9:21), however, Lot became drunk because his daughters made him drink wine (וַתִּשְׁקֵן אֶת אָבִיהֶן יַיִן [“So they made their father drink wine”]; 19:33; cf. 19:32, 34–35). While the difference may not take Lot off the moral hook, at the very least the transgression is more clearly pronounced in Noah's case.<sup>18</sup> Yet whatever positive bearing this may have on Lot's characterization is minimal at best. Even though Lot is here the victim of a larger scheme, he is nevertheless culpable for allowing himself to become drunk on two separate occasions, which calls into question his moral character.

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<sup>16</sup> The same literary function holds true for the only other two occurrences of “ark” (תֵּבָה) outside the flood narrative (Exod 2:3, 5). There, the term refers to the basket in which baby Moses was placed and sent down the Nile to be delivered from Pharaoh's edict.

<sup>17</sup> Noah and Lot serve as the only two individuals in the Pentateuch who become drunk.

<sup>18</sup> Though some scholars see no negative connotation with Noah's drunkenness, several allusions in this account cast Noah's actions as a second fall (see Steinmetz 1994; Tomasino 1992).



As we mentioned above, Lot and Noah were given specific exit instructions (8:16; 19:12), which they both obeyed (וַיֵּצֵא נֹחַ [8:18]; וַיֵּצֵא לוֹט [19:14]). Admittedly, the prevalence of the term יָצָא in Genesis and the rest of the OT significantly weakens the possibility of an intentional allusion. If an allusion is present, however, particularly with respect to Noah's and Lot's obedient responses, the alluding text would seem to be 19:14. Whereas the character of Noah neither gains nor loses anything in being mapped onto Lot here, the possibility of Lot being cast in Noah's shadow would indicate that Lot's initial obedience was akin to Noah's—a "righteous" (צַדִּיק) man (6:9; 7:1).

That Lot and Noah both "find" (מָצָא) *divine* "favor" (חֵן) is conspicuous (6:8; 19:19). Even in the absence of an intentional allusion or echo, the infrequency of one finding divine favor in the OT calls attention to it. As we noted above, however, there is a difference in how the two narratives ascribe favor to Noah and Lot. After the Lord "sees" man's great wickedness on the earth, he regrets having made man and decides to destroy his creation (6:5–7). The narrator then interjects, "But Noah found favor in the eyes of the Lord" (וַיִּנָּח מֵצָא חֵן בְּעֵינֵי יְהוָה; 6:8). This adversative clause suggests that Noah will be exempted from the judgment just announced in v. 7; he stands in contrast to the creation just condemned. In the Sodom story, the narrator does not directly ascribe divine favor to Lot. Instead, in a dialogue with one of the angels, Lot acknowledges, "Behold, your servant has found favor in your sight" (הִנֵּה נָא מֵצָא עַבְדְּךָ חֵן בְּעֵינֶיךָ; 19:19). If Lot's claim is accurate, then it follows that the favor he finds is an extension of divine favor, since the two men are

deputized to speak and act on God's behalf; they represent and carry out the divine will (18:20–22). But the question still stands as to whether Lot's claim to have found favor is an instance of a character misspeaking, which demands consideration.

Lot's initial claim to have found divine favor is followed by a clause that begins with an imperfect waw consecutive: "and you have shown me great kindness in sparing my life" (ותגדל חסדך אשר עשית עמדי להחיות את נפשי; 19:19). Here, the waw consecutive is most likely expressing the result of the previous clause. Lot's claim to have found favor is thus his response to his life being spared. Put differently, since his life has been spared, Lot concludes that he has found favor in the eyes of the lead angel. Significantly, the angel concedes to Lot's claim in granting Lot's request to flee to Zoar: "Behold, I grant you this favor *also*" (הנה נשאתי פניך גם לדבר הזה; 19:21). In the present context the adverb גם signifies a favor given in addition to a former favor, which in this case can only refer to the sparing of Lot's life. In conceding to the result clause spoken by Lot in 19:19b, then, the angel implicitly accepts the independent clause it modifies, namely, Lot's claim to have found favor in his eyes (19:19a). Since the OT offers no reason to believe that an angel would speak mistruth, it follows that Lot's claim to have found favor is accurate. Thus Lot, like Noah, found divine favor.

The meaning of the idiom "to find favor in the eyes of" is taken up in a recent study on Noah by C. Kaminski, who argues:

"Since the idiom 'to find favour' is based on the generosity or good will of the one who grants it, rather than being based on obligation, this seems to

suggest that God is not *obligated* to show favour to Noah. Any interpretation of Gen 6:8 which includes notions of merit or obligation seems to be at odds with the usual function of the idiom, which emphasizes the generosity or good will of the one who grants it.”<sup>19</sup>

The findings of Kaminski and others call into question the notion that Noah, in particular, merits divine favor because of his righteousness, made explicit in 6:9 and 7:1.<sup>20</sup> In short: that Noah would merit divine favor in 6:8 runs fundamentally against the standard meaning of the idiom. The relevance of this observation for the present study is that it precludes the possibility that *Lot* could be considered righteous on the basis of finding divine favor.<sup>21</sup> Again, any notion of the recipient’s merit or the giver’s obligation to extend favor runs counter to the sense of the idiom.<sup>22</sup> For both Noah and Lot, divine favor is found only because God generously extends it as an act of unmerited grace, and therefore it has no bearing on either man’s characterization as righteous.

### 3.2.2 The Meaning and Function of צדיק in the Sodom Story

The most appropriate starting point to consider the possible meanings of צדיק (“righteous”) in Genesis is chapter 18, since its presence there makes up seventy

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<sup>19</sup> Kaminski 2014, 110, emphasis original.

<sup>20</sup> See, e.g., Harland 1996, 54, quoted in Kaminski 2014, 110.

<sup>21</sup> Furthermore, as Kaminski and others have shown from the use of the idiom in Jacob’s encounter with Esau (Gen 32–33) and the golden calf narrative (Exod 32–34), the extending of favor can be wholly unmerited, since some who received it (e.g., Jacob, Israel) deserved judgment instead of favor (see Kaminski 2014, 116–25).

<sup>22</sup> For a consideration of several texts that would seem to support the idea that favor can be merited, see Kaminski 2014, 112–16.

percent of its occurrences in the book.<sup>23</sup> Kaminski and others have made a compelling case for the *judicial* context of 18:16–33, which has a significant effect on the meaning of צדיק.<sup>24</sup> Several features of the text bear out the judicial context of 18:16–33. (i) The expression “by doing justice and righteousness” (לעשות צדקה ומשפט; 18:19), for instance, “is used on occasions to refer to the administration of justice in judicial procedures.”<sup>25</sup> In 18:19, the expression “anticipates the legal proceedings that are about to take place.”<sup>26</sup> (ii) The “cry/outcry” (זעק) against Sodom in the following verse is a term often used in judicial contexts to establish the grounds for the judicial proceedings. (iii) Language of the Lord’s “go[ing] down and see[ing]” (ארדה נא ואראה) in 18:21 “describes both the investigation of the crime and the *notitia criminis*.” The same verbs appear together in the Babel story (וירד יהוה לראת; 11:5), in which the Lord descends to investigate the people and their tower. Kaminski concludes: “Both texts thus have punitive overtones as the divine judge descends to investigate the crime.” (iv) When the Lord seeks to investigate whether the inhabitants of Sodom and Gomorrah have “done” (עשה) according to their outcry (18:21), it is the actions, the behavior, of the citizens that are in view, which is precisely what will be weighed in

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<sup>23</sup> Note, again, that the adjective צדיק occurs twice in the flood narrative (6:9; 7:1) and seven times in the Sodom narrative (18:23, 24 [2x], 25 [2x], 26, 28).

<sup>24</sup> The following argument is a summary of Kaminski 2014, 142–48, who relies heavily on Boyce 1988 and especially Bovati 1994 and Bruckner 2001.

<sup>25</sup> Kaminski 2014, 143; citing Bruckner (2001, 91), Kaminski here references 1 Kgs 10:9; 2 Sam 8:15; Ps 99:4; Jer 22:3, 15–18; 23:5.

<sup>26</sup> Kaminski 2014, 143; the citations that follow, *ibid.*, 145.

determining whether or not they qualify as “righteous.”<sup>27</sup> (v) In the same verse, the intended outcome of the Lord “go[ing] down” to “see” is that he might “know” (ידע) the true state of things (on the ground, as it were). The verb ידע (“to know”), too, is used in judicial contexts, especially when it is paired with ראה (“to see”).<sup>28</sup> The upshot is that together the two verbs can be used to establish “certainty of the crime in legal proceedings,”<sup>29</sup> as they do in 18:21. (vi) That Abraham “stood before the Lord” (ואברהם עומד לפני יהוה; 18:22) set the stage for his juridical appeal,<sup>30</sup> which commenced when he “drew near” (נגש; 18:23), a term that “has procedural value in the context of litigation; Abraham’s ‘drawing near’ to the Lord...can be identified as the first procedure prior to the trial.”<sup>31</sup> (vii) The use of דבר (18:25) in the context of judgment denotes a “legal case” or “juridical decision.”<sup>32</sup> (viii) The “discovery phase” of the investigation in the judicial proceedings is signaled by the verb מצא (“to find”; 18:26, 28, 29, 30 [2x], 31, 32). (ix) Lastly, the description of the Lord as “the judge of all the earth” (השפט כל הארץ; 18:25) further contributes to the judicial context of

<sup>27</sup> Cf. the referencing of the citizens’ behavior in Jer 23:14; Ezek 16:49 (Kaminski 2014, 145). For the use of עשה to introduce an accusation in court, see Brucker 2001, 112, 114–16; Bovati 1994, 118–19.

<sup>28</sup> See, e.g., 1 Sam 14:38; Jer 5:1; 12:3; Ps 139:23–24; Job 10:4–7; 11:11; 22:13–14, listed in Bovati 1994, 245.

<sup>29</sup> Kaminski 2014, 146.

<sup>30</sup> For other such appeals see, e.g., Deut 19:17 and 1 Kgs 3:16 (Mathews 2005, 226–27, referenced in Kaminski 2014, 146 n. 29).

<sup>31</sup> Kaminski 2014, 146.

<sup>32</sup> In judicial contexts דבר can also be translated as “ruling,” as Bruckner does (2001, 96, referenced in Kaminski 2014, 146–47). Of the nine occurrences of the syntagma משפט + הדבר in the Hebrew scriptures, Bruckner (1994, 100) claims that in seven instances “the reference is to a legal case to be decided (Gen 18:25; Deut. 1:17; 17:8, 9, 11; 2 Sam. 15:6; 2 Chron. 19:6),” while the other two occurrences also have a legal context, wherein משפט refers specifically to an ordinance and הדבר its particular duty (2 Chron 8:14; Ezra 3:4).

18:16–33, insofar as “[t]he participle form of שפט is used of judges who are appointed to make judicial decisions in Israel.”<sup>33</sup>

In view of the judicial context of 18:16–33, Kaminski and others have suggested that צדיק should here be translated as “in the right, innocent”—not “righteous.”<sup>34</sup> In the present context צדיק stands over against רשע, that is, one who is “guilty” (18:23, 25 [2x]).<sup>35</sup> The forensic sense of the term is in view here, as it is in other judicial contexts in the Pentateuch (e.g., Gen 20:1–18; Exod 23:7–8; Deut 16:19; 25:1).<sup>36</sup> Thus, while the rest of the inhabitants of Sodom and Gomorrah were found “guilty” (רשע) and therefore destroyed along with the cities, Lot was spared from judgment, which would seem to imply that he was found to be “in the right, innocent” (צדיק) and rescued on this basis.

Even in the event that Lot is inferred to be צדיק from Abraham’s plea (18:16–33), however, two factors make it difficult to maintain that he was rescued on this basis. First, 19:16 would seem to root Lot’s deliverance in the Lord’s “mercy, pity” (חמלה). Though Lot lingered after the angels urged him to leave, they seized him by the hand and led him outside the city, “for the Lord was merciful to him” (בחמלת יהוה עליו). As far as 19:16 is concerned, the reason for Lot’s rescue lies not in an implied status as an innocent man, but rather it is due to a divine, unmerited act of compassion. Second, according to the summary statement of 19:29, the basis of

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<sup>33</sup> Kaminski 2014, 147. Kaminski also marshals Bruckner’s survey of שפט in the Abraham narratives (2001, 19–20), which leads him to conclude that the term gives evidence of other judicial procedures in these narratives.

<sup>34</sup> Kaminski 2014, 148–50. See also Bovati 1994, 103 n. 18, 186, 348–49, 356.

<sup>35</sup> Kaminski 2014, 149–50, drawing on Brucker 2001, 96–97.

<sup>36</sup> For an examination of the meaning of צדיק in these texts, see Kaminski 2014, 148–53.

Lot's deliverance (or perhaps what Lot's deliverance resulted from) is the Lord's "remember[ing]" Abraham, his covenant vassal. As Mathews suggests, "'God remembered' identifies the prior covenant obligation (12:3) as the basis for the divine intervention, not the righteousness of Lot."<sup>37</sup> Consequently, the Sodom narrative does not seem open to the notion that Lot was rescued because of his innocence. Whether Lot was "in the right, innocent" is an important question, but the answer would not seem to affect the reasons for Lot's deliverance, as stated explicitly in 19:16, 29. As far as Lot's innocence in the Sodom narrative is concerned, the reader is simply left to wonder if his rescue implies that God regarded him as "innocent" (צדיק) rather than "guilty" (רשע), even if an implicit divine verdict itself does not serve as the basis for Lot's deliverance. Simply put, the Sodom story alone provides no clear answer to the question, Is Lot צדיק?

### 3.2.3 The Meaning and Function of צדיק in the Flood Story

In contrast to the Sodom story, the ascription of צדיק to Noah in the Flood story is unequivocal (6:9; 7:1). The linguistic correspondences and analogous contexts of the Flood and Sodom stories would seem to suggest that what governs the precise meaning of צדיק in 6:9 and 7:1 is another *judicial* context.<sup>38</sup> Again, both stories share

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<sup>37</sup> Mathews 2005, 243, though it is also possible that what God specifically remembers in 19:29 is Abraham's earlier intercession in 18:16–33 (so Wenham 1994, 59).

<sup>38</sup> This conclusion stands over against those who argue for a covenantal context in interpreting the meaning of צדיק as "covenant faithfulness" in 6:9 and 7:1 (e.g., Dumbrell 1984, 11–43; Waltke 1988, 126, 131, 138; Wenham 1994, 175, 206). For a trenchant critique of this view, see Kaminski 2014, 154–61.

a similar subject matter, “where the ‘crime and punishment’ schema dominates.”<sup>39</sup> A judicial context for 6:9 and 7:1 is also in keeping with the forensic use of צדיק elsewhere in the Pentateuch, as we noted above (e.g., Gen 20:1–18; Exod 23:7–8; Deut 16:19; 25:1). In discerning the precise meaning of צדיק in 6:9 and 7:1, Kaminski further appropriates the work of Bruckner and H. Schmid<sup>40</sup> and concludes that in Genesis צדיק functions as a legal term, bearing a legal referent, which occurs in judicial, *creational* contexts, (again) not covenantal contexts.<sup>41</sup> Thus “the characterization of Noah as a ‘righteous man’ means that he is living in conformity *with the created order*.”<sup>42</sup>

Specifically, 6:9 functions as part of the introduction to Noah’s Toledot,<sup>43</sup> and is “a proleptic statement that anticipates the divine verdict in 7:1,” the function of which “is to shape expectations for the ensuing story about Noah, and as such, it does not provide the rationale for divine favour, but gives advanced notice of the divine verdict.”<sup>44</sup> 7:1, on the other hand, occurs in the temporal storyline of the flood,<sup>45</sup> giving the reason why Noah was allowed to enter the ark. Whereas 6:9 represents the narrator’s voice, the ascription to Noah in 7:1 comes directly from the

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<sup>39</sup> Kaminski 2014, 162.

<sup>40</sup> Schmid 1968; 1974; 1984.

<sup>41</sup> See Kaminski 2014, 164–68; cf. Seifrid’s broader conclusion, based on his own study of righteousness in the Hebrew scriptures: “It seems quite clear that the biblical understanding of righteousness has to do in the first instance with the context of creation, not that of covenant” (2001, 426).

<sup>42</sup> Kaminski 2014, 168, emphasis added.

<sup>43</sup> See Kaminski 2014, 184–88.

<sup>44</sup> Kaminski 2014, 198; the argument that follows, *ibid.*, 169–93; for Kaminski’s fuller treatment of 6:9 in particular, see *ibid.*, 184–91; see also Sternberg’s discussion of proleptic portraits in Hebrew narrative, who similarly argues that biblical epithets precede the actions they reference (1985, 321–41).

<sup>45</sup> As indicated by the presence of *wayyiqtol*.



Lord's mouth. The Lord says that he has *seen* (ראה) that Noah is righteous (צדיק), which, in judicial contexts, as we recall, is a term that signifies the investigation of a crime, followed by an announcement of judgment. Here, however, "it is possible that YHWH's 'seeing' Noah entails a judicial examination of his actions,"<sup>46</sup> specifically his obedience in building the ark, summarized in the previous verse: "Noah did everything just as God commanded him" (ויעש נח ככל אשר צוה אתו אלהים בן עשה) (6:22).<sup>47</sup> Kaminski further argues that since the verb עשה ("to do, make") is used repeatedly with reference to the building of the ark (6:14, 15, 16), its use in 6:22 suggests that specifically in view is Noah's obedience in building *the ark*. Thus the announcement of Noah's righteousness in 7:1 serves as the Lord's judicial verdict on Noah after his actions are examined. It is after Noah obeys the divine commands preceding 7:1 that he is "acquitted in a legal sense,"<sup>48</sup> and as such will be rescued from the coming deluge. That Noah is a legal referent in a creational context further entails that his obedience is in keeping with the created order. Put differently: "Noah's obedience is in harmony with God's intention for humanity; hence the verdict that he is צדיק."

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<sup>46</sup> Kaminski 2014, 175.

<sup>47</sup> The fact that the direct object אתך ("you") is fronted in the dependent clause of 7:1 would further seem to emphasize the importance of *Noah* being examined (ראה) by God.

<sup>48</sup> Kaminski 2014, 175; the citation that follows, *ibid.*, 182.

### 3.3 THE EFFECT OF NOAH'S RIGHTEOUSNESS ON THE CHARACTERIZATION OF LOT

So far we have sought to demonstrate the thoroughly analogical nature of the flood and Sodom stories in order to examine specifically the seemingly *intentional* correspondences between the depictions of Noah and Lot, and what effect(s) such correspondences might have on Lot's characterization. To review, it is readily observable that Noah and Lot share a similar depiction in the flood and Sodom stories: both men are warned of an impending divine judgment and given specific instructions to escape the judgment along with their household; and although both men find divine favor and are delivered from God's judgment, it is especially conspicuous that their character arcs have a remarkably similar ending: both men become drunk, which in turn exposes them to be sexually violated by their offspring. Although we determined that none of the explicit correspondences between Noah and Lot have any import for viewing Lot in a more positive light, these analogical strands between the two characters has left an open door to consider the possibility that *the explicit ascription of Noah's righteousness in the biblical text was transferred to Lot in Jewish tradition.*

An important point of ambiguity was observed above with regard to the notion that Lot could be considered among the צדיק on behalf of whom Abraham pleaded (18:16–33) precisely because he was delivered from divine judgment. Namely, since the narrator links Lot's deliverance to the Lord's "mercy, pity" (חמלה; 19:16) and God's remembrance of his covenant with Abraham (19:29), the question of Lot's righteousness, or better "innocence," is left unanswered in the Sodom narrative. This

unanswered question inevitably creates a gap for the reader to fill, one which is all the more striking given the prominence of the righteousness theme in the Sodom story. While the imposition of 19:16 and 19:29 seems to preclude what would otherwise be a reasonable deduction, that is, that Lot was saved because he was found to be צדיק, Lot's analogical relationship to Noah provides fertile exegetical ground for such an interpretation. Indeed, in view of the correspondences between Noah and Lot, it is not a stretch to infer that just as Noah's actions were examined (ראה; 7:1) by God and found to be צדיק (7:1), so Lot's actions were likewise subject to God's investigation (ראה; 18:21) and found to be צדיק. That both men are spared from divine judgment, in contrast to the "wicked"<sup>49</sup> who suffered it, warrants this inference. Furthermore, just as Noah's righteousness was a legal declaration given on the basis of what he "did" (עשה; 6:14, 15, 16, 22) in building the ark, it may well be that the employment of the same verb, עשה, in 19:3 suggests that Lot did in fact *do* something that placed him among those who are "in the right"—unlike the Sodomites. In particular, (at least) part of what is examined is Lot's hospitality towards the visitors: "he made [עשה] them a feast and baked unleavened bread" (19:3). Could it be that what building the ark is to Noah, the preparation of food (and presumably lodging) is to Lot? For in this way Lot, like Noah, is seen to be living in harmony with God's intention for humanity; his hospitable actions are in accordance with God's created order, which stands over against the "men of the city"

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<sup>49</sup> In the flood story man's wickedness is expressed using the noun רעה (6:5) and the adjective רע (6:5; 8:21), whereas in the Sodom story the adjective רשע performs the same function (18:23, 35).

who, in seeking to violate Lot's guests, invert God's created order and consequently incur his judgment.

A potential point of tension in proposing that the source of Lot's righteousness could plausibly originate from a warranted exegetical inference from Noah's righteousness arises from the apparent contradiction between Lot being saved on the basis of his innocence *and* on the basis of God's mercy (19:16) and remembrance of Abraham (19:29). Attention to the sequence of the temporal storyline would seem to dispel this idea, however. If it holds true that Lot's innocence, evidenced in his actions toward the visitors, is implicit in the narrative leading up to 19:16, it would seem that in "lingering" (מְהֵרָה; 19:16) Lot nonetheless places himself at risk of being destroyed along with the cities. That Lot could be reckoned צַדִּיק on the basis of his hospitality and yet fail in delaying obedience to the angels' command to flee poses no contradiction. In 19:16 the reader confronts an innocent man, who, by his own folly, would have perished along with the wicked were it not for God's mercy in forcefully leading him and his household out of the city. Accordingly, the summary statement of 19:29 adds that the mercy shown to Lot was not primarily for Lot's sake—but rather Abraham's.

### 3.4 NOAH AND LOT TOGETHER IN WISDOM OF SOLOMON AND 2 PETER

There is no escaping the speculative nature of the current proposal. As we have acknowledged already, the source from which the tradition of Lot's righteousness stems, and in particular the basis of Peter's description of Lot as righteous, could be

due to a number of possibilities. Nevertheless, the idea that Lot's righteousness in Jewish and Christian tradition may be the result of an exegetical inference, warranted by (1) an ambiguity in the Sodom story concerning Lot's righteousness and (2) the analogical nature of the flood and Sodom stories in general and Noah and Lot in particular, has further merit insofar as both Noah and Lot appear *together* as righteous men in Jewish and Christian texts.

In Wisdom of Solomon 10, for example, the author addresses the role of wisdom (personified) in the world, specifically in wisdom's "providential guidance of the people through chosen vessels in each generation."<sup>50</sup> Among the "righteous" (δίκαιος) listed are Noah and Lot, both of which function as models of those whom wisdom saved over against the wicked who perished:

"When because of him the earth was flooded, wisdom again saved it, piloting the righteous man [τὸν δίκαιον] by a worthless piece of wood.<sup>5</sup> She also, when nations, collaborating together in wickedness, were put to confusion, recognized the righteous man [τὸν δίκαιον] and preserved him blameless with God and kept him strong in the face of compassion for his child.<sup>6</sup> She rescued a righteous man [δίκαιον], when the impious were perishing, as he fled from the fire descending on the Five Cities" (Wis 10:4–6, NETS).<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>50</sup> Suggs 1970, 21, cited in Winston 1979, 211.

<sup>51</sup> Cf. the attribution of righteousness to Lot in 19:17, "They were stricken also with loss of sight—just as were those at the doors of the righteous man [δίκαιου]—when, surrounded by thick darkness, each tried to find the way through their own doors" (NETS).

Admittedly, the mere mention of Noah and Lot together as righteous men in the same context does not bolster the claim that the tradition of Lot's righteousness may have been derived from Noah, but at a minimum it would seem to betray a level of comfort on the part of the author of Wisdom in perceiving Noah and Lot as analogous characters. For the author of Wisdom, Lot, along with Adam, Noah, Abraham, Jacob, and the nation of Israel under oppressive rule, served as an illustration of Wisdom's power to rescue the righteous among their wicked counterparts (10:1–21).<sup>52</sup>

More important for the present argument is that *Peter* seems to hold the same disposition towards Noah and Lot as the author of Wisdom, for in the immediately preceding context of 2 Pet 2:7–8, Peter mentions Noah, “a herald of righteousness” (δικαιοσύνης κήρυκα; 2:5), who, like “righteous” Lot, was spared from God's judgment. That mention would be made of the righteousness of both men—in the same immediate context—may suggest that Peter also perceived Noah and Lot as analogous characters. The significance of recognizing the conceptual pairing of Noah and Lot is that it further helps to establish that the claim that Noah's righteousness may have been exegetically grafted onto Lot is not mere whimsy. Rather, the pairing of these two righteous characters in Jewish and Christian texts is precisely the sort of evidence that would attest to a conceptual birthing ground for the kind of inner-biblical exegesis we have put forward.

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<sup>52</sup> Winston 1979, 211.

### 3.5 CONCLUSION

Our discussion of Lot's righteousness began with an investigation into the analogical nature of the flood and Sodom stories, which led us to conclude that the abundant number of shared locutions between the two stories suggests that one of, or perhaps both, stories were *intentionally* composed and/or reworked in light of the other. Making this observation requires the reader to go further by asking, What then are the literary functions of these correspondences as such? Of all the correspondences observed, we determined that it was only the shared locution צדיק that had any import for a positive characterization of Lot. The judicial and creational context in which צדיק occurs in the two stories was critical to the main argument, insofar as it established that when צדיק is used to describe a legal referent in a judicial context, it should be interpreted as a *judicial verdict* and is accordingly best translated as "in the right, innocent." Even so, the crux of the matter was that Lot is never explicitly called צדיק in the Sodom story; and furthermore the reasons given for Lot's deliverance in 19:16 and 19:29 would seem to preclude any other grounds on which Lot was saved—including the assumption that Lot must have been among the צדיק for whom Abraham pleaded before God (18:16–33). Again, within the world of the Sodom story itself, Lot's deliverance from judgment was solely due to God's mercy (19:16) and his remembrance of Abraham (19:29). That the Sodom narrative itself provides no clear answer to the question of Lot's righteousness left the door open to consider the possibility that Lot's righteousness in 2 Pet 2:7–8 stems from an interpretive upshot of reading Noah and Lot as analogous characters. When read in

this way, it becomes reasonable to infer that just as Noah's actions in building (עשה; 6:14, 15, 16, 22) the ark were examined (ראה; 7:1) by God and explicitly declared to be "in the right" (צדיק; 7:1), so Lot's actions in extending hospitality (עשה; 19:3) were likewise examined (ראה; 18:21) and *implicitly* declared to be "in the right." This suggestion further entailed that both contexts portray Noah and Lot as living in obedience to God's created order, to God's intention for humanity, albeit in different ways; and in this way both men serve as an antithesis to the surrounding culture, which, in standing fundamentally opposed to God's will for humanity, merit God's judgment. Lastly, occurrence of Noah and Lot together in Wisdom of Solomon 10:4–6 and 2 Pet 2:5–8 was brought to bear on the present study, the result of which was a modest proposal. That is to say, the pairing of Noah and Lot together in Jewish and Christian texts may serve as evidence for a conceptual category that would later give birth to the kind of inner-biblical exegesis we have advocated, an exegesis sparked by an acute attention to the presence and function of allusion and analogy in the Hebrew scriptures. While it is going too far to assert that the source of Lot's righteousness in 2 Pet 2:7–8 is undoubtedly the result of inner-biblical exegesis of the flood and Sodom stories, the present argument would seem to be plausible in view of the textual evidence for the analogical nature of the two narratives and the apparent awareness in Jewish and Christian thought that these two men were conceived as analogous characters.



## Chapter 4

### CONCLUDING REFLECTIONS

The impetus for this project lay in the desire to explore the possibility that a New Testament author's claim might be the product of his inner-biblical exegesis of the Old Testament itself—a possibility that is still largely ignored in New Testament scholarship. In view of the fact that the flood and Sodom stories are thoroughly analogical, and the fact that Noah and Lot appear together in 2 Pet 2:5–8, the author's perplexing claim in vv. 7–8 concerning Lot's righteousness makes it a fitting text to explore such a possibility. Simply put, could Peter's claim concerning Lot's righteousness be the result of his inner-biblical exegesis of the accounts of Noah and Lot in the flood and Sodom stories? It would seem so. Indeed: if Noah and Lot are portrayed as the object of God's salvation amidst the divine judgment of the wicked in such a way that both men, in “finding” divine “favor” (חן + מצא [Gen 6:8 // 19:19]), enter a refuge (הביתה // התבה) wherein they are divinely safeguarded through the closing of a door (סגר + בוא [7:16 // 19:10]) and given specific exit instructions (הוצא מן המקום [19:12] // צא מן התבה [Gen 8:16]) which they then obey (ויצא לוט [19:14] // ויצא נח [8:18]), ultimately culminating in their deliverance by God's “resting” (נוח [8:4 // 19:16]) them after his judgment; and if Noah and Lot are depicted in such a way that both men, after being rescued, are sexually violated by their offspring as the result of becoming drunk with “wine” (יין [9:20–21 // 19:30–38])—and all this in two stories where God works destruction (שחת [6:13, 17; 18:28 (2x), 31, 32; 19:13, 14, 29]) by “raining” down (מטר [7:4 // 19:24]) judgment while

never failing to “remember” (זכר [8:1 // 19:29]) his covenant vassals—then it seems reasonable to suggest that just as Noah’s actions in building (עשה; 6:14, 15, 16, 22) the ark were judicially examined (ראה; 7:1) by God and explicitly declared to be “in the right” (צדיק; 7:1), so Peter inferred that Lot’s actions in extending hospitality (עשה; 19:3) were likewise examined (ראה; 18:21) by God and *implicitly* declared to be “in the right.”

To be sure, there are several differences in the proposed correspondences. One could nitpick that whereas God closed the door of the ark, two angels closed the door of Lot’s house, or whereas Noah was violated by one of his sons, Lot was violated by his two daughters; but such differences in no way falsify the legitimacy of the proposed correspondences. In most cases the correspondences are readily observable and would seem to accomplish their communicative intent despite such trivial variances.

These proposed inner-biblical correspondences inevitably raise important questions regarding the implied readership of Genesis and their ability (or lack thereof) to identify instances of scriptural reuse. Whatever one makes of the implied readers, it is salutary to realize at the outset that any reconstruction of the intended readership should be governed primarily by the nature and characteristics of the texts themselves, rather than speculation over literacy rates, the general education level of the average Israelite, and so on. In short, one would do better to prioritize literary evidence over historical reconstruction. What should especially be kept in mind is that “the detection of the allusion (denotative function of the marker) should

be distinguished from determination of the presence of the allusion.”<sup>1</sup> In view of the presence and function of the above correspondences, it would seem that “one must insist that a culture capable in the first place of producing and cultivating works of such multi-layered literary complexity and exegetical sophistication must also be cognizant of, or at least potentially capable of recognizing, the presence and/or significance of such activity in its own objects of inquiry and of responding to these meaning signals on the textual surface. This is especially the case if we are considering tradents and scribes who are nearly contemporaneous with those at work in some biblical strata.”<sup>2</sup> Thus it would seem, at least on the basis of the sophisticated, covert allusions and analogies observed throughout this study, that the implied readership of the flood and Sodom stories displayed an extremely high level of literary competence.<sup>3</sup>

While we (again) acknowledge the inevitably speculative nature of this project, it would appear to be on firmer exegetical ground than several alternatives. For example, even in the event that Lot’s hospitality is portrayed as being equal to or exceeding Abraham’s hospitality (18:2–8), attempts to establish Lot’s righteousness in Gen 19 on moral grounds alone proves unconvincing in light of Lot’s offer of his daughters (19:8), and his lingering (19:16) and drunkenness (19:30–38; see chapter 2). A full consideration of Lot’s actions in the Sodom narrative precludes any

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<sup>1</sup> McAuley 2015, 75.

<sup>2</sup> Teeter 2013, 356.

<sup>3</sup> Teeter extends this claim (rightfully, I believe) to the entire Hebrew Bible: “The literary strategies employed throughout the compositions of the Hebrew Bible require a robust and highly sophisticated literary competence on the part of the implied readership” (ibid.); see also especially idem 2014, 265.

possibility that he could be considered “righteous” on the basis of his moral character alone. In addition, though it is possible that Peter could have inferred Lot’s righteousness from the mere fact that he was saved, there is no evidence in 2 Peter itself to support this idea. This suggestion becomes all the more tenuous when one considers the explicit reasons given for Lot’s deliverance in Gen 19: God’s “mercy” upon Lot (19:16) and God’s “remembering” Abraham (19:29). Again, as far as Lot’s “righteousness,” or better “innocence,” *in the Sodom narrative* is concerned, the reader is simply left to wonder if his rescue implies that God regarded him as “innocent” (צדיק) rather than “guilty” (רשע), for the Sodom story itself provides no clear answer to the question, Is Lot צדיק? It is no less tenuous to suggest that Peter’s characterization of Lot as righteous is due to haggadic development. Though this possibility might prove true, it currently lacks any evidence to support it.

To conclude: the distinct advantage of the present proposal is that it takes seriously as its point of departure the mention of “righteous” (δίκαιος) Lot in the same immediate context where Noah, “a preacher of righteousness [δικαιοσύνης],” appears (2 Pet 2:5–8). That mention is made of Lot and Noah together in Wis 10:4–6, both of whom are designated with the epithet “righteous” (δίκαιος), further warrants the exploration into the possible effects of inner-biblical exegesis of Noah and Lot in the flood and Sodom stories. In view of all the evidence considered, the idea that Lot’s righteousness in 2 Pet 2:7–8 stems from an exegetical grafting of Noah’s righteousness onto Lot deserves serious consideration.

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## ABSTRACT

This work argues for the plausibility that Peter's characterization of Lot as "righteous" in 2 Pet 2:7–8 was due to the effects of inner-biblical exegesis of Noah and Lot in the flood and Sodom stories. In chapter 1 the investigation proceeds by establishing criteria for identifying and assessing various forms of scriptural reuse. Chapter 2 surveys and evaluates scholarship on the issue of Lot's moral character in order to discover whether Lot's righteousness can be established on the basis of his moral character alone, especially as it is depicted in the Sodom story (Gen 19). Chapter 3 is the heart of the thesis, inasmuch as it argues that Lot's analogical relationship to Noah provides strong exegetical warrant for understanding Lot's characterization in 2 Pet 2:7–8. The work then reaches its end with some concluding reflections on the relative plausibility of the main argument over against some competing suggestions for the origin of Peter's characterization of Lot as a "righteous" man.

## VITA

The author of this work is Aaron William Debelak. Born January 15, 1983, in Boa Vista, Brazil, he has spent most of his formative years in Peoria, Illinois. During that time, he received his formal education at Peoria Christian School. Upon completion of required studies at Peoria Christian School, he entered Moody Bible Institute in Chicago. From there, he received a bachelor of arts degree with a major in biblical studies, graduating with honors. After founding Bluewater Window Cleaning Inc., he operated his business for four years, after which he entered Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary. His studies will be completed in August, 2017. Mr. Debelak currently resides in South Hamilton, Massachusetts with his wife, Lydia, and their two children, Evey and Dietrich, and foster child, Aleigha.